

**NOAM CHOMSKY**



**READER**



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

An introductory word to the 'anarchive'  
“Anarchy is Order!”

*'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.*

*I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'*

(William Blake)

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchive' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order (in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the '**principles, propositions and discussions**' of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this

project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchiv offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*‘demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will-‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance’.*  
(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us.  
Don’t mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism,cooperation can be send  
to

[A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be)

A complete list and updates are available on this  
address, new texts are always

**welcome!!**

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Noam Chomsky on Anarchism, Marxism and Hope for the Future

**FIRST PUBLISHED IN RED & BLACK REVOLUTION NO 2  
1996**

Noam Chomsky is widely known for his critique of U.S foreign policy, and for his work as a linguist. Less well known is his ongoing support for libertarian socialist objectives. In a special interview done for Red and Black Revolution, Chomsky gives his views on anarchism and marxism, and the prospects for socialism now. The interview was conducted in May 1995 by Kevin Doyle.

RBR: First off, Noam, for quite a time now you've been an advocate for the anarchist idea. Many people are familiar with the introduction you wrote in 1970 to Daniel Guerin's Anarchism, but more recently, for instance in the film Manufacturing Consent, you took the opportunity to highlight again the potential of anarchism and the anarchist idea. What is it that attracts you to anarchism?

CHOMSKY: I was attracted to anarchism as a young teenager, as soon as I began to think about the world beyond a pretty narrow range, and haven't seen much reason to revise those early attitudes since. I think it only makes sense to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them; unless a justification for them can be given, they are illegitimate, and should be dismantled, to increase the scope of human freedom. That includes political power, ownership and management, relations among men and women, parents and children, our control over the fate of

future generations (the basic moral imperative behind the environmental movement, in my view), and much else. Naturally this means a challenge to the huge institutions of coercion and control: the state, the unaccountable private tyrannies that control most of the domestic and international economy, and so on. But not only these. That is what I have always understood to be the essence of anarchism: the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met. Sometimes the burden can be met. If I'm taking a walk with my grandchildren and they dart out into a busy street, I will use not only authority but also physical coercion to stop them. The act should be challenged, but I think it can readily meet the challenge. And there are other cases; life is a complex affair, we understand very little about humans and society, and grand pronouncements are generally more a source of harm than of benefit. But the perspective is a valid one, I think, and can lead us quite a long way.

Beyond such generalities, we begin to look at cases, which is where the questions of human interest and concern arise.

RBR: It's true to say that your ideas and critique are now more widely known than ever before. It should also be said that your views are widely respected. How do you think your support for anarchism is received in this context? In particular, I'm interested in the response you receive from people who are getting interested in politics for the first time and who may, perhaps, have come across your views. Are such people surprised by your support for anarchism? Are they interested?

CHOMSKY: The general intellectual culture, as you know, associates 'anarchism' with chaos, violence, bombs,

disruption, and so on. So people are often surprised when I speak positively of anarchism and identify myself with leading traditions within it. But my impression is that among the general public, the basic ideas seem reasonable when the clouds are cleared away. Of course, when we turn to specific matters -- say, the nature of families, or how an economy would work in a society that is more free and just -- questions and controversy arise. But that is as it should be. Physics can't really explain how water flows from the tap in your sink. When we turn to vastly more complex questions of human significance, understanding is very thin, and there is plenty of room for disagreement, experimentation, both intellectual and real-life exploration of possibilities, to help us learn more.

RBR: Perhaps, more than any other idea, anarchism has suffered from the problem of misrepresentation. Anarchism can mean many things to many people. Do you often find yourself having to explain what it is that you mean by anarchism? Does the misrepresentation of anarchism bother you?

CHOMSKY: All misrepresentation is a nuisance. Much of it can be traced back to structures of power that have an interest in preventing understanding, for pretty obvious reasons. It's well to recall David Hume's *Principles of Government*. He expressed surprise that people ever submitted to their rulers. He concluded that since Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular. Hume was very astute -- and incidentally, hardly a libertarian by the standards of the day. He surely



underestimates the efficacy of force, but his observation seems to me basically correct, and important, particularly in the more free societies, where the art of controlling opinion is therefore far more refined. Misrepresentation and other forms of befuddlement are a natural concomitant.

So does misrepresentation bother me? Sure, but so does rotten weather. It will exist as long as concentrations of power engender a kind of commissar class to defend them. Since they are usually not very bright, or are bright enough to know that they'd better avoid the arena of fact and argument, they'll turn to misrepresentation, vilification, and other devices that are available to those who know that they'll be protected by the various means available to the powerful. We should understand why all this occurs, and unravel it as best we can. That's part of the project of liberation -- of ourselves and others, or more reasonably, of people working together to achieve these aims.

Sounds simple-minded, and it is. But I have yet to find much commentary on human life and society that is not simple-minded, when absurdity and self-serving posturing are cleared away.

RBR: How about in more established left-wing circles, where one might expect to find greater familiarity with what anarchism actually stands for? Do you encounter any surprise here at your views and support for anarchism?

CHOMSKY: If I understand what you mean by established left-wing circles, there is not too much surprise about my views on anarchism, because very little is known about my views on anything. These are not the circles I deal with. You'll rarely find a reference to anything I say or write. That's not completely true of course. Thus in the US (but

less commonly in the UK or elsewhere), you'd find some familiarity with what I do in certain of the more critical and independent sectors of what might be called established left-wing circles, and I have personal friends and associates scattered here and there. But have a look at the books and journals, and you'll see what I mean. I don't expect what I write and say to be any more welcome in these circles than in the faculty club or editorial board room -- again, with exceptions.

The question arises only marginally, so much so that it's hard to answer.

RBR: A number of people have noted that you use the term 'libertarian socialist' in the same context as you use the word 'anarchism'. Do you see these terms as essentially similar? Is anarchism a type of socialism to you? The description has been used before that anarchism is equivalent to socialism with freedom. Would you agree with this basic equation?

CHOMSKY: The introduction to Guerin's book that you mentioned opens with a quote from an anarchist sympathiser a century ago, who says that anarchism has a broad back, and endures anything. One major element has been what has traditionally been called 'libertarian socialism'. I've tried to explain there and elsewhere what I mean by that, stressing that it's hardly original; I'm taking the ideas from leading figures in the anarchist movement whom I quote, and who rather consistently describe themselves as socialists, while harshly condemning the 'new class' of radical intellectuals who seek to attain state power in the course of popular struggle and to become the vicious Red bureaucracy of which Bakunin warned; what's often called 'socialism'. I rather agree with Rudolf Rocker's

perception that these (quite central) tendencies in anarchism draw from the best of Enlightenment and classical liberal thought, well beyond what he described. In fact, as I've tried to show they contrast sharply with Marxist-Leninist doctrine and practice, the 'libertarian' doctrines that are fashionable in the US and UK particularly, and other contemporary ideologies, all of which seem to me to reduce to advocacy of one or another form of illegitimate authority, quite often real tyranny.

### The Spanish Revolution

RBR: In the past, when you have spoken about anarchism, you have often emphasised the example of the Spanish Revolution. For you there would seem to be two aspects to this example. On the one hand, the experience of the Spanish Revolution is, you say, a good example of 'anarchism in action'. On the other, you have also stressed that the Spanish revolution is a good example of what workers can achieve through their own efforts using participatory democracy. Are these two aspects -- anarchism in action and participatory democracy -- one and the same thing for you? Is anarchism a philosophy for people's power?

CHOMSKY: I'm reluctant to use fancy polysyllables like philosophy to refer to what seems ordinary common sense. And I'm also uncomfortable with slogans. The achievements of Spanish workers and peasants, before the revolution was crushed, were impressive in many ways. The term 'participatory democracy' is a more recent one, which developed in a different context, but there surely are points of similarity. I'm sorry if this seems evasive. It is, but that's because I don't think either the concept of anarchism

or of participatory democracy is clear enough to be able to answer the question whether they are the same.

RBR: One of the main achievements of the Spanish Revolution was the degree of grassroots democracy established. In terms of people, it is estimated that over 3 million were involved. Rural and urban production was managed by workers themselves. Is it a coincidence to your mind that anarchists, known for their advocacy of individual freedom, succeeded in this area of collective administration?

CHOMSKY: No coincidence at all. The tendencies in anarchism that I've always found most persuasive seek a highly organised society, integrating many different kinds of structures (workplace, community, and manifold other forms of voluntary association), but controlled by participants, not by those in a position to give orders (except, again, when authority can be justified, as is sometimes the case, in specific contingencies).

### Democracy

RBR: Anarchists often expend a great deal of effort at building up grassroots democracy. Indeed they are often accused of taking democracy to extremes. Yet, despite this, many anarchists would not readily identify democracy as a central component of anarchist philosophy. Anarchists often describe their politics as being about 'socialism' or being about 'the individual'- they are less likely to say that anarchism is about democracy. Would you agree that democratic ideas are a central feature of anarchism?

CHOMSKY: Criticism of 'democracy' among anarchists has often been criticism of parliamentary democracy, as it

has arisen within societies with deeply repressive features. Take the US, which has been as free as any, since its origins. American democracy was founded on the principle, stressed by James Madison in the Constitutional Convention in 1787, that the primary function of government is to protect the minority of the opulent from the majority. Thus he warned that in England, the only quasi-democratic model of the day, if the general population were allowed a say in public affairs, they would implement agrarian reform or other atrocities, and that the American system must be carefully crafted to avoid such crimes against the rights of property, which must be defended (in fact, must prevail). Parliamentary democracy within this framework does merit sharp criticism by genuine libertarians, and I've left out many other features that are hardly subtle -- slavery, to mention just one, or the wage slavery that was bitterly condemned by working people who had never heard of anarchism or communism right through the 19th century, and beyond.

### Leninism

RBR: The importance of grassroots democracy to any meaningful change in society would seem to be self evident. Yet the left has been ambiguous about this in the past. I'm speaking generally, of social democracy, but also of Bolshevism -- traditions on the left that would seem to have more in common with elitist thinking than with strict democratic practice. Lenin, to use a well-known example, was sceptical that workers could develop anything more than trade union consciousness- by which, I assume, he meant that workers could not see far beyond their immediate predicament. Similarly, the Fabian socialist, Beatrice Webb, who was very influential in the Labour Party in England, had the view that workers were only

interested in horse racing odds! Where does this elitism originate and what is it doing on the left?

CHOMSKY: I'm afraid it's hard for me to answer this. If the left is understood to include 'Bolshevism,' then I would flatly dissociate myself from the left. Lenin was one of the greatest enemies of socialism, in my opinion, for reasons I've discussed. The idea that workers are only interested in horse-racing is an absurdity that cannot withstand even a superficial look at labour history or the lively and independent working class press that flourished in many places, including the manufacturing towns of New England not many miles from where I'm writing -- not to speak of the inspiring record of the courageous struggles of persecuted and oppressed people throughout history, until this very moment. Take the most miserable corner of this hemisphere, Haiti, regarded by the European conquerors as a paradise and the source of no small part of Europe's wealth, now devastated, perhaps beyond recovery. In the past few years, under conditions so miserable that few people in the rich countries can imagine them, peasants and slum-dwellers constructed a popular democratic movement based on grassroots organisations that surpasses just about anything I know of elsewhere; only deeply committed commissars could fail to collapse with ridicule when they hear the solemn pronouncements of American intellectuals and political leaders about how the US has to teach Haitians the lessons of democracy. Their achievements were so substantial and frightening to the powerful that they had to be subjected to yet another dose of vicious terror, with considerably more US support than is publicly acknowledged, and they still have not surrendered. Are they interested only in horse-racing?

I'd suggest some lines I've occasionally quoted from Rousseau: when I see multitudes of entirely naked savages scorn European voluptuousness and endure hunger, fire, the sword, and death to preserve only their independence, I feel that it does not behoove slaves to reason about freedom.

RBR: Speaking generally again, your own work -- *Deterring Democracy*, *Necessary Illusions*, etc. -- has dealt consistently with the role and prevalence of elitist ideas in societies such as our own. You have argued that within 'Western' (or parliamentary) democracy there is a deep antagonism to any real role or input from the mass of people, lest it threaten the uneven distribution in wealth which favours the rich. Your work is quite convincing here, but, this aside, some have been shocked by your assertions. For instance, you compare the politics of President John F. Kennedy with Lenin, more or less equating the two. This, I might add, has shocked supporters of both camps! Can you elaborate a little on the validity of the comparison?

CHOMSKY: I haven't actually equated the doctrines of the liberal intellectuals of the Kennedy administration with Leninists, but I have noted striking points of similarity -- rather as predicted by Bakunin a century earlier in his perceptive commentary on the new class. For example, I quoted passages from McNamara on the need to enhance managerial control if we are to be truly free, and about how the undermanagement that is the real threat to democracy is an assault against reason itself. Change a few words in these passages, and we have standard Leninist doctrine. I've argued that the roots are rather deep, in both cases. Without further clarification about what people find shocking, I can't comment further. The comparisons are specific, and I think both proper and properly qualified. If not, that's an error, and I'd be interested to be enlightened about it.

## Marxism

RBR: Specifically, Leninism refers to a form of marxism that developed with V.I. Lenin. Are you implicitly distinguishing the works of Marx from the particular criticism you have of Lenin when you use the term 'Leninism'? Do you see a continuity between Marx's views and Lenin's later practices?

CHOMSKY: Bakunin's warnings about the Red bureaucracy that would institute the worst of all despotic governments were long before Lenin, and were directed against the followers of Mr. Marx. There were, in fact, followers of many different kinds; Pannekoek, Luxembourgh, Mattick and others are very far from Lenin, and their views often converge with elements of anarcho-syndicalism. Korsch and others wrote sympathetically of the anarchist revolution in Spain, in fact. There are continuities from Marx to Lenin, but there are also continuities to Marxists who were harshly critical of Lenin and Bolshevism. Teodor Shanin's work in the past years on Marx's later attitudes towards peasant revolution is also relevant here. I'm far from being a Marx scholar, and wouldn't venture any serious judgement on which of these continuities reflects the 'real Marx,' if there even can be an answer to that question.

RBR: Recently, we obtained a copy of your own Notes On Anarchism (<http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/other/notes-on-anarchism.html>) (re-published last year by Discussion Bulletin in the USA). In this you mention the views of the early Marx, in particular his development of the idea of alienation under capitalism. Do you generally agree with



this division in Marx's life and work -- a young, more libertarian socialist but, in later years, a firm authoritarian?

CHOMSKY: The early Marx draws extensively from the milieu in which he lived, and one finds many similarities to the thinking that animated classical liberalism, aspects of the Enlightenment and French and German Romanticism. Again, I'm not enough of a Marx scholar to pretend to an authoritative judgement. My impression, for what it is worth, is that the early Marx was very much a figure of the late Enlightenment, and the later Marx was a highly authoritarian activist, and a critical analyst of capitalism, who had little to say about socialist alternatives. But those are impressions.

RBR: From my understanding, the core part of your overall view is informed by your concept of human nature. In the past the idea of human nature was seen, perhaps, as something regressive, even limiting. For instance, the unchanging aspect of human nature is often used as an argument for why things can't be changed fundamentally in the direction of anarchism. You take a different view? Why?

CHOMSKY: The core part of anyone's point of view is some concept of human nature, however it may be remote from awareness or lack articulation. At least, that is true of people who consider themselves moral agents, not monsters. Monsters aside, whether a person who advocates reform or revolution, or stability or return to earlier stages, or simply cultivating one's own garden, takes stand on the grounds that it is 'good for people.' But that judgement is based on some conception of human nature, which a reasonable person will try to make as clear as possible, if

only so that it can be evaluated. So in this respect I'm no different from anyone else.

You're right that human nature has been seen as something 'regressive,' but that must be the result of profound confusion. Is my granddaughter no different from a rock, a salamander, a chicken, a monkey? A person who dismisses this absurdity as absurd recognises that there is a distinctive human nature. We are left only with the question of what it is -- a highly nontrivial and fascinating question, with enormous scientific interest and human significance. We know a fair amount about certain aspects of it -- not those of major human significance. Beyond that, we are left with our hopes and wishes, intuitions and speculations.

There is nothing regressive about the fact that a human embryo is so constrained that it does not grow wings, or that its visual system cannot function in the manner of an insect, or that it lacks the homing instinct of pigeons. The same factors that constrain the organism's development also enable it to attain a rich, complex, and highly articulated structure, similar in fundamental ways to conspecifics, with rich and remarkable capacities. An organism that lacked such determinative intrinsic structure, which of course radically limits the paths of development, would be some kind of amoeboid creature, to be pitied (even if it could survive somehow). The scope and limits of development are logically related.

Take language, one of the few distinctive human capacities about which much is known. We have very strong reasons to believe that all possible human languages are very similar; a Martian scientist observing humans might conclude that there is just a single language, with minor variants. The reason is that the particular aspect of human

nature that underlies the growth of language allows very restricted options. Is this limiting? Of course. Is it liberating? Also of course. It is these very restrictions that make it possible for a rich and intricate system of expression of thought to develop in similar ways on the basis of very rudimentary, scattered, and varied experience.

What about the matter of biologically-determined human differences? That these exist is surely true, and a cause for joy, not fear or regret. Life among clones would not be worth living, and a sane person will only rejoice that others have abilities that they do not share. That should be elementary. What is commonly believed about these matters is strange indeed, in my opinion.

Is human nature, whatever it is, conducive to the development of anarchist forms of life or a barrier to them? We do not know enough to answer, one way or the other. These are matters for experimentation and discovery, not empty pronouncements.

The future

RBR: To begin finishing off, I'd like to ask you briefly about some current issues on the left. I don't know if the situation is similar in the USA but here, with the fall of the Soviet Union, a certain demoralisation has set in on the left. It isn't so much that people were dear supporters of what existed in the Soviet Union, but rather it's a general feeling that with the demise of the Soviet Union the idea of socialism has also been dragged down. Have you come across this type of demoralisation? What's your response to it?

CHOMSKY: My response to the end of Soviet tyranny was similar to my reaction to the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini. In all cases, it is a victory for the human spirit. It should have been particularly welcome to socialists, since a great enemy of socialism had at last collapsed. Like you, I was intrigued to see how people -- including people who had considered themselves anti-Stalinist and anti-Leninist -- were demoralised by the collapse of the tyranny. What it reveals is that they were more deeply committed to Leninism than they believed.

There are, however, other reasons to be concerned about the elimination of this brutal and tyrannical system, which was as much socialist as it was democratic (recall that it claimed to be both, and that the latter claim was ridiculed in the West, while the former was eagerly accepted, as a weapon against socialism -- one of the many examples of the service of Western intellectuals to power). One reason has to do with the nature of the Cold War. In my view, it was in significant measure a special case of the 'North-South conflict,' to use the current euphemism for Europe's conquest of much of the world. Eastern Europe had been the original 'third world,' and the Cold War from 1917 had no slight resemblance to the reaction of attempts by other parts of the third world to pursue an independent course, though in this case differences of scale gave the conflict a life of its own. For this reason, it was only reasonable to expect the region to return pretty much to its earlier status: parts of the West, like the Czech Republic or Western Poland, could be expected to rejoin it, while others revert to the traditional service role, the ex-Nomenklatura becoming the standard third world elite (with the approval of Western state-corporate power, which generally prefers them to alternatives). That was not a pretty prospect, and it has led to immense suffering.

Another reason for concern has to do with the matter of deterrence and non-alignment. Grotesque as the Soviet empire was, its very existence offered a certain space for non-alignment, and for perfectly cynical reasons, it sometimes provided assistance to victims of Western attack. Those options are gone, and the South is suffering the consequences.

A third reason has to do with what the business press calls the pampered Western workers with their luxurious lifestyles. With much of Eastern Europe returning to the fold, owners and managers have powerful new weapons against the working classes and the poor at home. GM and VW can not only transfer production to Mexico and Brazil (or at least threaten to, which often amounts to the same thing), but also to Poland and Hungary, where they can find skilled and trained workers at a fraction of the cost. They are gloating about it, understandably, given the guiding values.

We can learn a lot about what the Cold War (or any other conflict) was about by looking at who is cheering and who is unhappy after it ends. By that criterion, the victors in the Cold War include Western elites and the ex-Nomenklatura, now rich beyond their wildest dreams, and the losers include a substantial part of the population of the East along with working people and the poor in the West, as well as popular sectors in the South that have sought an independent path.

Such ideas tend to arouse near hysteria among Western intellectuals, when they can even perceive them, which is rare. That's easy to show. It's also understandable. The

observations are correct, and subversive of power and privilege; hence hysteria.

In general, the reactions of an honest person to the end of the Cold War will be more complex than just pleasure over the collapse of a brutal tyranny, and prevailing reactions are suffused with extreme hypocrisy, in my opinion.

### Capitalism

RBR: In many ways the left today finds itself back at its original starting point in the last century. Like then, it now faces a form of capitalism that is in the ascendancy. There would seem to be greater 'consensus' today, more than at any other time in history, that capitalism is the only valid form of economic organisation possible, this despite the fact that wealth inequality is widening. Against this backdrop, one could argue that the left is unsure of how to go forward. How do you look at the current period? Is it a question of 'back to basics'? Should the effort now be towards bringing out the libertarian tradition in socialism and towards stressing democratic ideas?

CHOMSKY: This is mostly propaganda, in my opinion. What is called 'capitalism' is basically a system of corporate mercantilism, with huge and largely unaccountable private tyrannies exercising vast control over the economy, political systems, and social and cultural life, operating in close co-operation with powerful states that intervene massively in the domestic economy and international society. That is dramatically true of the United States, contrary to much illusion. The rich and privileged are no more willing to face market discipline than they have been in the past, though they consider it just fine for the general population. Merely to cite a few illustrations, the Reagan

administration, which revelled in free market rhetoric, also boasted to the business community that it was the most protectionist in post-war US history -- actually more than all others combined. Newt Gingrich, who leads the current crusade, represents a superrich district that receives more federal subsidies than any other suburban region in the country, outside of the federal system itself. The 'conservatives' who are calling for an end to school lunches for hungry children are also demanding an increase in the budget for the Pentagon, which was established in the late 1940s in its current form because -- as the business press was kind enough to tell us -- high tech industry cannot survive in a pure, competitive, unsubsidized, 'free enterprise' economy, and the government must be its saviour. Without the saviour, Gingrich's constituents would be poor working people (if they were lucky). There would be no computers, electronics generally, aviation industry, metallurgy, automation, etc., etc., right down the list. Anarchists, of all people, should not be taken in by these traditional frauds.

More than ever, libertarian socialist ideas are relevant, and the population is very much open to them. Despite a huge mass of corporate propaganda, outside of educated circles, people still maintain pretty much their traditional attitudes. In the US, for example, more than 80% of the population regard the economic system as inherently unfair and the political system as a fraud, which serves the special interests, not the people. Overwhelming majorities think working people have too little voice in public affairs (the same is true in England), that the government has the responsibility of assisting people in need, that spending for education and health should take precedence over budget-cutting and tax cuts, that the current Republican proposals that are sailing through Congress benefit the rich and harm

the general population, and so on. Intellectuals may tell a different story, but it's not all that difficult to find out the facts.

RBR: To a point anarchist ideas have been vindicated by the collapse of the Soviet Union -- the predictions of Bakunin have proven to be correct. Do you think that anarchists should take heart from this general development and from the perceptiveness of Bakunin's analysis? Should anarchists look to the period ahead with greater confidence in their ideas and history?

CHOMSKY: I think -- at least hope -- that the answer is implicit in the above. I think the current era has ominous portent, and signs of great hope. Which result ensues depends on what we make of the opportunities.

RBR: Lastly, Noam, a different sort of question. We have a pint of Guinness on order for you here. When are you going to come and drink it?

CHOMSKY: Keep the Guinness ready. I hope it won't be too long. Less jocularly, I'd be there tomorrow if we could. We (my wife came along with me, unusual for these constant trips) had a marvellous time in Ireland, and would love to come back. Why don't we? Won't bore you with the sordid details, but demands are extraordinary, and mounting -- a reflection of the conditions I've been trying to describe.



# **NOAM CHOMSKY ON ANARCHISM**

## **INTERVIEW WITH TOM LANE**

December 23, 1996

### Introduction

Though Chomsky has written a considerable amount about anarchism in the past three decades, people often ask him for a more tangible, detailed vision of social change. His political analysis never fails to instill outrage and anger with the way the world works, but many readers are left uncertain about what exactly Chomsky would do to change it. Perhaps because they regard his analytical work with such respect, they anticipate he will lay out his goals and strategy with similar precision and clarity, only to be disappointed with his generalized statements of libertarian socialist values. Or perhaps many look to a great intellectual to provide a "master plan" for them to follow step-by-step into a bright shining future.

Yet Chomsky shys away from such pronouncements. He cautions that it is difficult to predict what particular forms a more just social organization will take, or even to know for sure what alternatives to the current system are ideal. Only experience can show us the best answers to these questions, he says. What should guide us along the way are a general set of principles which will underly whatever specific forms our future society will take. For Chomsky, those principles arise from the historical trend of thought and action known as anarchism.

Chomsky warns that little can be said about anarchism on a very general level. "I haven't tried to write anything

systematic about these topics, nor do I know of anything by others that I could recommend," he wrote to me in reply to a set of questions on the subject. He's written here and there about it, notably in the recent Powers and Prospects, (<http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/pp/pp.html>) but there just isn't a lot to say in general terms. "The interest lies in the applications," he thinks, "but these are specific to time and place."

"In Latin America," Chomsky says, "I talked about many of these topics, and far more important, learned about them from people who are actually doing things, a good deal of which had an anarchist flavor. Also had a chance to meet with lively and interesting groups of anarchists, from Buenos Aires to Belem at the mouth of the Amazon (the latter I didn't know about at all -- amazing where our friends show up). But the discussions were much more focused and specific than I often see here; and rightly, I think."

As such, Chomsky's responses to these questions are general and terse. However, as a brief introduction to some of his thoughts on anarchism, perhaps they may inspire the reader to pursue other writings on the subject (a list appears at the end of the questions), and more importantly, to develop the concept of anarchism through the process of working for a more free and democratic society.

Tom Lane

ANSWERS FROM CHOMSKY TO EIGHT QUESTIONS ON  
ANARCHISM

General comment on all the questions:

No one owns the term "anarchism." It is used for a wide range of different currents of thought and action, varying widely. There are many self-styled anarchists who insist, often with great passion, that theirs is the only right way, and that others do not merit the term (and maybe are criminals of one or another sort). A look at the contemporary anarchist literature, particularly in the West and in intellectual circles (they may not like the term), will quickly show that a large part of it is denunciation of others for their deviations, rather as in the Marxist-Leninist sectarian literature. The ratio of such material to constructive work is depressingly high.

Personally, I have no confidence in my own views about the "right way," and am unimpressed with the confident pronouncements of others, including good friends. I feel that far too little is understood to be able to say very much with any confidence. We can try to formulate our long-term visions, our goals, our ideals; and we can (and should) dedicate ourselves to working on issues of human significance. But the gap between the two is often considerable, and I rarely see any way to bridge it except at a very vague and general level. These qualities of mine (perhaps defects, perhaps not) will show up in the (very brief) responses I will make to your questions.

1. What are the intellectual roots of anarchist thought, and what movements have developed and animated it throughout history?

The currents of anarchist thought that interest me (there are many) have their roots, I think, in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism, and even trace back in interesting ways to the scientific revolution of the 17th century, including aspects that are often considered reactionary, like Cartesian rationalism. There's literature on the topic (historian of ideas Harry Bracken, for one; I've written about it too). Won't try to recapitulate here, except to say that I tend to agree with the important anarchosyndicalist writer and activist Rudolf Rocker that classical liberal ideas were wrecked on the shoals of industrial capitalism, never to recover (I'm referring to Rocker in the 1930s; decades later, he thought differently). The ideas have been reinvented continually; in my opinion, because they reflect real human needs and perceptions. The Spanish Civil War is perhaps the most important case, though we should recall that the anarchist revolution that swept over a good part of Spain in 1936, taking various forms, was not a spontaneous upsurge, but had been prepared in many decades of education, organization, struggle, defeat, and sometimes victories. It was very significant. Sufficiently so as to call down the wrath of every major power system: Stalinism, fascism, western liberalism, most intellectual currents and their doctrinal institutions -- all combined to condemn and destroy the anarchist revolution, as they did; a sign of its significance, in my opinion.

2. Critics complain that anarchism is "formless, utopian." You counter that each stage of history has its own forms of authority and oppression which must be challenged, therefore no fixed doctrine can apply. In your opinion, what specific realization of anarchism is appropriate in this epoch?

I tend to agree that anarchism is formless and utopian, though hardly more so than the inane doctrines of

neoliberalism, Marxism-Leninism, and other ideologies that have appealed to the powerful and their intellectual servants over the years, for reasons that are all too easy to explain. The reason for the general formlessness and intellectual vacuity (often disguised in big words, but that is again in the self-interest of intellectuals) is that we do not understand very much about complex systems, such as human societies; and have only intuitions of limited validity as to the ways they should be reshaped and constructed.

Anarchism, in my view, is an expression of the idea that the burden of proof is always on those who argue that authority and domination are necessary. They have to demonstrate, with powerful argument, that that conclusion is correct. If they cannot, then the institutions they defend should be considered illegitimate. How one should react to illegitimate authority depends on circumstances and conditions: there are no formulas.

In the present period, the issues arise across the board, as they commonly do: from personal relations in the family and elsewhere, to the international political/economic order. And anarchist ideas -- challenging authority and insisting that it justify itself -- are appropriate at all levels.

3. What sort of conception of human nature is anarchism predicated on? Would people have less incentive to work in an egalitarian society? Would an absence of government allow the strong to dominate the weak? Would democratic decision-making result in excessive conflict, indecision and "mob rule"?

As I understand the term "anarchism," it is based on the hope (in our state of ignorance, we cannot go beyond that) that core elements of human nature include sentiments of solidarity, mutual support, sympathy, concern for others, and so on.

Would people work less in an egalitarian society? Yes, insofar as they are driven to work by the need for survival; or by material reward, a kind of pathology, I believe, like the kind of pathology that leads some to take pleasure from torturing others. Those who find reasonable the classical liberal doctrine that the impulse to engage in creative work is at the core of human nature -- something we see constantly, I think, from children to the elderly, when circumstances allow -- will be very suspicious of these doctrines, which are highly serviceable to power and authority, but seem to have no other merits.

Would an absence of government allow the strong to dominate the weak? We don't know. If so, then forms of social organization would have to be constructed -- there are many possibilities -- to overcome this crime.

What would be the consequences of democratic decision-making? The answers are unknown. We would have to learn by trial. Let's try it and find out.

4. Anarchism is sometimes called libertarian socialism -- How does it differ from other ideologies that are often associated with socialism, such as Leninism?

Leninist doctrine holds that a vanguard Party should assume state power and drive the population to economic development, and, by some miracle that is unexplained, to freedom and justice. It is an ideology that naturally appeals greatly to the radical intelligentsia, to whom it affords a justification for their role as state managers. I can't see any reason -- either in logic or history -- to take it seriously. Libertarian socialism (including a substantial mainstream of Marxism) dismissed all of this with contempt, quite rightly.

5. Many "anarcho-capitalists" claim that anarchism means the freedom to do what you want with your property and

engage in free contract with others. Is capitalism in any way compatible with anarchism as you see it?

Anarcho-capitalism, in my opinion, is a doctrinal system which, if ever implemented, would lead to forms of tyranny and oppression that have few counterparts in human history. There isn't the slightest possibility that its (in my view, horrendous) ideas would be implemented, because they would quickly destroy any society that made this colossal error. The idea of "free contract" between the potentate and his starving subject is a sick joke, perhaps worth some moments in an academic seminar exploring the consequences of (in my view, absurd) ideas, but nowhere else.

I should add, however, that I find myself in substantial agreement with people who consider themselves anarcho-capitalists on a whole range of issues; and for some years, was able to write only in their journals. And I also admire their commitment to rationality -- which is rare -- though I do not think they see the consequences of the doctrines they espouse, or their profound moral failings.

6. How do anarchist principles apply to education? Are grades, requirements and exams good things? What sort of environment is most conducive to free thought and intellectual development?

My feeling, based in part on personal experience in this case, is that a decent education should seek to provide a thread along which a person will travel in his or her own way; good teaching is more a matter of providing water for a plant, to enable it to grow under its own powers, than of filling a vessel with water (highly unoriginal thoughts I should add, paraphrased from writings of the Enlightenment and classical liberalism). These are general principles, which I think are generally valid. How they apply in particular circumstances has to be evaluated case

by case, with due humility, and recognition of how little we really understand.

7. Depict, if you can, how an ideal anarchist society would function day-to-day. What sorts of economic and political institutions would exist, and how would they function? Would we have money? Would we shop in stores? Would we own our own homes? Would we have laws? How would we prevent crime?

I wouldn't dream of trying to do this. These are matters about which we have to learn, by struggle and experiment.

8. What are the prospects for realizing anarchism in our society? What steps should we take?

Prospects for freedom and justice are limitless. The steps we should take depend on what we are trying to achieve. There are, and can be, no general answers. The questions are wrongly put. I am reminded of a nice slogan of the rural workers' movement in Brazil (from which I have just returned): they say that they must expand the floor of the cage, until the point when they can break the bars. At times, that even requires defense of the cage against even worse predators outside: defense of illegitimate state power against predatory private tyranny in the United States today, for example, a point that should be obvious to any person committed to justice and freedom -- anyone, for example, who thinks that children should have food to eat -- but that seems difficult for many people who regard themselves as libertarians and anarchists to comprehend. That is one of the self-destructive and irrational impulses of decent people who consider themselves to be on the left, in my opinion, separating them in practice from the lives and legitimate aspirations of suffering people.

So it seems to me. I'm happy to discuss the point, and listen to counter-argument, but only in a context that allows us to go beyond shouting of slogans -- which, I'm afraid,



excludes a good deal of what passes for debate on the left, more's the pity.

Noam

In another letter, Chomsky offered this expansion on his thoughts regarding a future society:

About a future society, I...may be repeating, but it's something I've been concerned with every since I was a kid. I recall, about 1940, reading Diego Abad de Santillan's interesting book *After the Revolution*, criticizing his anarchist comrades and sketching in some detail how an anarcho-syndicalist Spain would work (these are >50 year old memories, so don't take it too literally). My feeling then was that it looked good, but do we understand enough to answer questions about a society in such detail? Over the years, naturally I've learned more, but it has only deepened my skepticism about whether we understand enough. In recent years, I've discussed this a good deal with Mike Albert, who has been encouraging me to spell out in detail how I think society should work, or at least react to his "participatory democracy" conception. I've backed off, in both cases, for the same reasons. It seems to me that answers to most such questions have to be learned by experiment. Take markets (to the extent that they could function in any viable society -- limited, if the historical record is any guide, not to speak of logic). I understand well enough what's wrong with them, but that's not sufficient to demonstrate that a system that eliminates market operations is preferable; simply a point of logic, and I don't think we know the answer. Same with everything else.

Some more material on anarchism from Chomsky:  
"Notes on Anarchism", in For Reasons of State  
Powers and Prospects, Chapter 4  
Another interview on Anarchism, Marxism and Hope for the Future  
The first chapter of American Power and the New Mandarins  
Excerpts in:  
Force and Opinion  
PeaceWORKS interview  
From other authors:  
See the bibliography in "Notes on Anarchism."

## **GLOBALIZATION AND RESISTANCE**

### **AN INTERVIEW WITH NOAM CHOMSKY BY HUSAYN AL-KURDI**

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Husayn Al-Kurdi: What do we need to know about NAFTA and GATT - what are their consequences and how can we more efficaciously resist their "globalizing" designs?

Noam Chomsky: NAFTA and GATT are somewhat different. NAFTA was much more popular among US corporations than GATT, because NAFTA is highly protectionist in ways that GATT is not. The main selling appeal of NAFTA to US corporations is that it gives them an advantage in the North American market over their European and Japanese competitors. That aside, NAFTA and GATT are quite similar. They both have highly protectionist elements. They're kind of a mixture of liberalization and protection designed to expand the power of transnational corporations. They're very basically investor's rights agreements. One crucial part in both is the "intellectual property right," which is a funny way of saying that corporations, like pharmaceutical companies, will have near-monopolistic rule over future technology. This now includes product as well as process rights.

These agreements increase corporate power, protecting huge, essentially totalitarian institutions from market discipline, and also from popular pressures and scrutiny. A network of semi-governmental institutions like the world trade organizations, the World Bank and so on, are taking over the process. There is a considerable polarization taking place here, increasing the gap between rich and poor. It's most dramatic in Third World countries, of course, but in the rich countries it's also very noticeable. Parts of the United States are taking on a Third World look. Enormous and growing parts of the population are basically superfluous for profit-making purposes. Along with this, the jail population is increasing very rapidly; it's the highest in the industrial world by far. New and onerous crime bills are being passed to deal with this superfluous population.

We're now in a situation in which Capital is highly mobile and Labour is basically immobile. The capacity to transfer production elsewhere is a weapon against the Western workers. Workers in different countries can easily be played off against each other.

HAK: Given that bleak but realistic scenario, what are the prospects for resistance to this "globalizing" process? How do we stop the juggernaut?

NC: Let's go back and take a lesson out of history. Measures have indeed been applied before. The same ideas were applied in England in the Revolution in the early 19th Century, when Classical Economics was developed also as a technique of class war, largely developed as an effort to drive the population into either the labour market or workhouse prison, and to eliminate

the pre-capitalist world. In the pre-capitalist world, everyone had a place. It might not have been a very nice place, even maybe a horrible place, but at least they had some place in the spectrum of the society and they had some kind of a right to live in the place. Now that's inconsistent with capitalism, which denies the right to live. You have only the right to remain on the labour market.

The population wouldn't tolerate this; they were unwilling to be denied the right to live, and, for a long time, the British Army was devoted to putting down riots. After that came the early socialist organizing, and so on. At that point the policy moved towards welfare-state capitalism and "laissez-faire" became a bad word for about a hundred years. That was on a national scale. Now the same thing is happening internationally, picking up on the early 19th Century but on a global scale, with pretty much the same ideology; people have no human rights, only the rights that they can gain on the labour market. Above all, wealth and power have to be protected.

It is reported that about 30% of the world's population is unemployed. That's worse than the Great Depression, but it's now an international phenomenon. You have 30% of the world unemployed, a huge amount of work. that needs to be done just rebuilding the society alone. The people who are unemployed want to do the work, but the system is such a catastrophic failure that it cannot bring together idle hands and work. This is all hailed as a great success, and it is a great success - for a very small sector of the population.

HAK: It seems that "globalization" and "internationalism" in all their varieties are detrimental to the health and true progress of the vast majority of the world's people.

NC: Yes, because of who is running it. This is class war on an, international scale, and power is in the hands of those who control the international economic system. This framework does require extensive state power to protect the rich. The Saudi, Arabian ruling class, for example, have rights because they are performing a service for Western power, ensuring that oil profits go to the West and not to the regional population. The local gendarmes like Israel, Turkey and so on have rights, at least in their ruling groups. Others do not.

HAK: There's a lot of discussion now on the question of "humanitarian" intervention, under which US/UN forces are sent to this or that country on "humanitarian" grounds. Where do you come down on this question?

NC: I don't think there are any absolute general principles. There are some things to be understood, and then you have to apply them to particular cases. You just have to go case by case. I agree with Bill Clinton that US forces should not be sent to Haiti, but not for his reasons.

The United States is alone among all the countries in that it does not permit US military forces to be under under any threat. Other countries are willing to have forces in peace-keeping operations where they sometimes are under threat, but the US is not willing to do that. On intervention under the UN framework, I think that sometimes that's legitimate, in fact even helpful. There

are many cases around the world in which the presence of UN peace-keeping forces has had a somewhat beneficial effect. In Bosnia right now, I think there is an argument for keeping and increasing ground forces under UN rule, with quite restricted rules of engagement.

HAK: You are a member of DSA, the "Democratic Socialists of America." When I went to talk to them about Palestinian and Kurdish national rights, they were indifferent at best, with one of their leaders informing me that morality and politics didn't mix. Freedom for Kurds and Palestinians was definitely not on their agenda. What's a nice professor like you, with strong moral commitment to liberation and human rights for all people, doing in a place like that?

NC: DSA is a mixture of people. Some of the younger people afford hope for the future. I am not opposed to reform initiatives. For example, if you can build up enough popular support in the United States to put through a reasonable health care program or to support the rights of the working people against the version of NAFTA which was rammed through, these can be good things.

HAK: But nowhere near the Alpha and Omega of revolutionary emancipation of the oppressed.

NC: No, but there are a lot of things that can be done within the framework of existing institutions which would be very valuable for people. On these particular kinds of things, reform groups perform a valuable service. What's more, they perform an organizing and

educational function. As far as DSA is concerned, I'm perfectly happy to be associated with it while disagreeing with a large part of the leadership.

HAK: So you think that's the best place for white people in the US to go politically?

NC: I wouldn't say that. I think it's a good place, but there are many others. Some of the others are also reformist. The New Party - that's the kind of social-democratic political party I'm happy to see develop, and I think that it'll do good things, and I'll also disagree with it. It could turn out to be something like the New Democratic Party in Canada, which has been by and large a positive force. It's made Canada in many ways a more pleasant place to live in. In addition to that, there are all the activist groups on every imaginable topic - solidarity groups, environmental and feminist groups - sectors of these movements do very valuable work.

HAK: What was behind the collapse of the Soviet Union? Give us your view of the Russian experience in this century from the Bolshevik revolution to Yeltsin.

NC: The Soviet Union was pretty much what Lenin and Trotsky said it was. The Bolshevik revolution was a counter-revolution. Its first moves were to destroy and eliminate every socialist tendency that had developed in the pre-revolutionary period. Their goal was as they said; it wasn't a big secret. They regarded the Soviet Union as sort a backwater. They were orthodox Marxists, expecting a revolution in Germany. They moved toward what they themselves called "state capitalism," then they



moved on to Stalinism. They called it democracy and called it socialism. The one claim was as ludicrous as the other. However, when you read about the end of the Soviet Union, it's always about the "death of socialism." They never say "the death of democracy." But it makes about the same sense.

I should add to this that Western intellectuals, and also Third World intellectuals, were attracted to the Bolshevik counter-revolution because Leninism is, after all, a doctrine which says that the radical intelligentsia have a right to take state power and to run their countries by force, and that is an idea which is rather appealing to intellectuals.

**THE SITUATION IN IRAQ:**  
**AN INTERVIEW WITH NOAM CHOMSKY**

ORIGINALLY FOR THE ITALIAN JOURNAL "LA  
REPUBBLICA"

GIAMPAOLO CADALANU

1) The intervention of the U.S. in Iraq seems at the moment unavoidable. Do you think the real reason of this intervention is to impose respect of U.N. resolutions?

Chomsky: To evaluate the proposal, we can ask how the US itself respects UN resolutions. There are simple ways to check. For the past 30 years, the US is far in the lead in vetoing Security Council Resolutions (Britain second, France a distant third). In the General Assembly, the US regularly votes against resolutions in virtual isolation -- hence in effect vetoing them -- on a wide range of issues. The pattern extends to the World Court, international conventions on human rights, and much else. Furthermore the US freely disregards violation of UN resolutions that it has formally endorsed, and often contributes materially to such violation. The case of Israel is notorious (for example, the 1978 Security Council resolution calling on Israel to withdraw immediately from Lebanon). To select another example that is quite relevant here, in December 1975 the Security Council unanimously ordered Indonesia to withdraw its invading forces from East Timor "without delay" and called upon "all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor as well as the inalienable right of its people to self-determination."

The US responded by (secretly) increasing its shipments of arms to the aggressors, accelerating the arms flow once again as the attack reached near-genocidal levels in 1978. In his memoirs, UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan takes pride in his success in rendering the UN "utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook," following the instructions of the State Department, which "wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about." The US also cheerfully accepts the robbery of East Timor's oil (with participation of US-based companies), in violation of any reasonable interpretation of international agreements. The analogy to Iraq/Kuwait is close, though there are differences: to mention only the most obvious, US-backed atrocities in East Timor were vastly beyond anything attributed to Saddam Hussein in Kuwait.

It is easy to extend the record. Like other great powers, the US is committed to the rule of force, not law, in international affairs. UN resolutions, World Court Judgments, International Conventions, etc., are acceptable if they accord with policy; otherwise they are mere words.

2) Which difference do you see between this intervention and Operation "Desert Storm", with the Bush administration?

Chomsky: There are many differences. "Desert Storm" was allegedly intended to drive Iraq from Kuwait; today the alleged goal is to compel Iraq to permit UN inspection of Saddam's weapons programs. In both cases, a closer look reveals a more complex story. After

Iraq invaded Kuwait, the US feared that in "the next few days Iraq will withdraw" leaving in place a puppet government and "everyone in the Arab world will be happy" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell). The concern, in brief, was that Iraq would act much as the US had done a few months earlier when it invaded Panama (vetoing two Security Council resolutions condemning its actions). What followed also does not quite conform to standard versions. Today, it is widely expected that a military strike will leave Iraq's murderous tyrant in power, continuing to pursue his weapons programs, while undermining such international inspection as exists.

It may also be recalled that Saddam's worst crimes were committed when he was a favored US ally and trading partner, and that immediately after he was driven from Kuwait, the US watched quietly while he turned to the slaughter of rebelling Iraqis, even refusing to allow them access to captured Iraqi arms. Official stories rarely yield an accurate picture of what is happening. Nonetheless, the differences between 1990 and today are substantial.

3) Do you believe that the so-called "Sexgate", the scandal about sexual behaviour of president Clinton, had a role in the decision to attack Iraq?

Chomsky: I doubt that it is much of a factor.

4) Do you see an alternative to the "new world order" of the U.S.?

Chomsky: "World order," like "domestic order," is based on decisions made within institutions that reflect existing power structures. The decisions can be changed; the

institutions can be modified or replaced. It is natural that those who benefit from the organization of state and private power will portray it as inevitable, so that the victims will feel helpless to act.

There is no reason to believe that. Particularly in the rich countries that dominate world affairs, citizens can easily act to create alternatives even within existing formal arrangements, and these are not graven in stone, any more than in the past.

5) Do you see in Iraq an alternative to Saddam Hussein?  
Chomsky: The rebelling forces in March 1991 were an alternative, but the US preferred Saddam. There was an Iraqi democratic opposition in exile. Washington refused to have anything to do with them before, during, or after the Gulf War, and they were virtually excluded from the US media, apart from marginal dissident journals. "Political meetings with them would not be appropriate for our policy at this time," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher stated on March 14, 1991, while Saddam was decimating the opposition under the eyes of Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf. They still exist. How realistic their programs are, I cannot judge, and I do not think we can know as long as the US remains committed -- as apparently it still is -- to the Bush administration policy that preferred "an iron-fisted Iraqi junta," without Saddam Hussein if possible, a return to the days when Saddam's "iron fist...held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia," not to speak of Washington (NY Times chief diplomatic correspondent Thomas Friedman, July 1991).

**EXCERPTS FROM POWERS AND PROSPECTS**  
**REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN NATURE**  
**AND THE SOCIAL ORDER**

**NOAM CHOMSKY**

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## CHAPTER ONE LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT: SOME REFLECTIONS ON VENERABLE THEMES

There is also a different approach to the [unification] problem, which is highly influential though it seems to me not only foreign to the sciences but also close to senseless. This approach divorces the cognitive sciences from a biological setting, and seeks tests to determine whether some object "manifests intelligence" ("plays chess," "understands Chinese," or whatever). The approach relies on the "Turing Test," devised by mathematician Alan Turing, who did much of the fundamental work on the modern theory of computation. In a famous paper of 1950, he proposed a way of evaluating the performance of a computer -- basically, by determining whether observers will be able to distinguish it from the performance of people. If they cannot, the device passes the test. There is no fixed Turing test; rather, a battery of devices constructed on this model. The details need not concern us.

Adopting this approach, suppose we are interested in deciding whether a programmed computer can play chess or understand Chinese. We construct a variant of the Turing test, and see whether a jury can be fooled into thinking that a human is carrying out the observed performance. If so, we will have "empirically established" that the computer can play chess, understand Chinese, think, etc., according to proponents of this version of artificial intelligence, while their critics deny that this result would establish the conclusion.

There is a great deal of often heated debate about these matters in the literature of the cognitive sciences, artificial intelligence, and philosophy of mind, but it is

hard to see that any serious question has been posed. The question of whether a computer is playing chess, or doing long division, or translating Chinese, is like the question of whether robots can murder or airplanes can fly -- or people; after all, the "flight" of the Olympic long jump champion is only an order of magnitude short of that of the chicken champion (so I'm told). These are questions of decision, not fact; decision as to whether to adopt a certain metaphoric extension of common usage.

There is no answer to the question whether airplanes really fly (though perhaps not space shuttles). Fooling people into mistaking a submarine for a whale doesn't show that submarines really swim; nor does it fail to establish the fact. There is no fact, no meaningful question to be answered, as all agree, in this case. The same is true of computer programs, as Turing took pains to make clear in the 1950 paper that is regularly invoked in these discussions. Here he pointed out that the question whether machines think "may be too meaningless to deserve discussion," being a question of decision, not fact, though he speculated that in 50 years, usage may have "altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted" -- as in the case of airplanes flying (in English, at least), but not submarines swimming. Such alteration of usage amounts to the replacement of one lexical item by another one with somewhat different properties. There is no empirical question as to whether this is the right or wrong decision.

In this regard, there has been serious regression since the first cognitive revolution, in my opinion. Superficially, reliance on the Turing test is reminiscent of the Cartesian approach to the existence of other minds. But the



comparison is misleading. The Cartesian experiments were something like a litmus test for acidity: they sought to determine whether an object has a certain property, in this case, possession of mind, one aspect of the world. But that is not true of the artificial intelligence debate.

Another superficial similarity is the interest in simulation of behavior, again only apparent, I think. As I mentioned earlier, the first cognitive revolution was stimulated by the achievements of automata, much as today, and complex devices were constructed to simulate real objects and their functioning: the digestion of a duck, a flying bird, and so on. But the purpose was not to determine whether machines can digest or fly. Jacques de Vaucanson, the great artificer of the period, was concerned to understand the animate systems he was modeling; he constructed mechanical devices in order to formulate and validate theories of his animate models, not to satisfy some performance criterion.

## CHAPTER TWO LANGUAGE AND NATURE

### The Externalist Orthodoxy

This brings us to the second aspect of the topic of language and nature: How does the use of language relate to the world?

The prevailing picture, established in the modern period particularly by Gottlob Frege, is based on three principles:

- I. There is a common store of thoughts.
- II. There is a common language that expresses these thoughts.
- III. The language is a set of well-formed expressions, and its semantics is based on a relation between parts of these expressions and things in the world.

This is the "representational" thesis I mentioned earlier, and is also accepted by "externalist" critics of the Fregean model.

Frege used the German word "Bedeutung" for the purported relation between expressions and things, but in an invented technical sense, because German lacks the relevant notion. English translations use such terms as "reference" or "denotation," also in a technical sense, for the same reason; the notion does not exist in English, or, it seems, any human language. There are somewhat similar notions: "talk about," "ask for," "refer to," etc. But when we look at all closely at these, we find that they have properties that make them quite unsuited for

the representational model. There is nothing wrong with introduction of technical terms for theoretical inquiry. On the contrary, there is no alternative; beyond the most elementary level, rational inquiry departs from the resources of common sense and ordinary language. What we ask about a theoretical framework is something different: Is it the right one, for the purposes at hand?

The Fregean picture is intelligible, perhaps correct, for the inquiry that primarily concerned Frege himself: exploring the nature of mathematics. As for natural language, Frege considered it too "imperfect" to merit much attention.

[. . .]

The picture also seems plausible in a normative sense for scientific inquiry, a rather special human endeavor. Both the history of science and introspection suggest that the scientist may be aiming intuitively at something like the Fregean picture: shared symbolic systems with terms that pick out what we hope are real things in the world: quarks, molecules, ants, human languages and their elements, etc.

But the picture makes no sense at all with regard to human languages -- a biological entity, to be investigated by the methods of the sciences, without arbitrary stipulations drawn from some other concern. The notion "common store of thoughts" has no empirical status, and is unlikely to gain one even if the science of the future discovers a reason, unknown today, to postulate entities that resemble "what we think (believe, fear, hope, expect, want, etc.)." Principle I seems groundless at best, senseless at worst.

As for II, the notion "common language" has no place in efforts to understand the phenomena of language and to explain them. Two people may talk alike, as they may look alike or live near one another. But it makes no more sense to postulate a "common language" that they share than a common shape or a common area. As in the case of "physical" or "real," the problem is not vagueness or unclarity: there is nothing to clarify; the world does not have shapes and areas, or shared languages. Nor are the terms devoid of meaning; they are just fine for ordinary usage. It makes sense for me to tell you that I live near Boston and far from Sydney, or to tell a Martian that I live near both but far from the moon. The same holds for looking alike, and speaking alike. I do or do not speak like people in Sydney, depending on the circumstances of the discourse. Some such circumstances -- pretty complicated ones -- pick out what we sometimes call "places" and "languages." From some points of view, the greater Boston area is a place; from others not. Chinese is a "language" and Romance not, as a result of such matters as colors on maps and stability of empires. But Chinese is no more an element of the world than the area around Boston; arguably much less so, because the conditions of individuation are so vastly more intricate and interest-related.

## C H A P T E R   T H R E E   WRITERS AND INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

For much of my life, I've been closely involved with pacifist groups in direct action and resistance, and educational and organizing projects. We've spent days in jail together, and it is a freakish accident that they did not extend to many years, as we realistically expected 30 years ago (an interesting tale, but a different one). That creates bonds of loyalty and friendship, but also brings out some disagreements. So, my Quaker friends and colleagues in disrupting illegitimate authority adopt the slogan: "Speak truth to power." I strongly disagree. The audience is entirely wrong, and the effort hardly more than a form of self-indulgence. It is a waste of time and a pointless pursuit to speak truth to Henry Kissinger, or the CEO of General Motors, or others who exercise power in coercive institutions -- truths that they already know well enough, for the most part.

Again, a qualification is in order. Insofar as such people dissociate themselves from their institutional setting and become human beings, moral agents, then they join everyone else. But in their institutional roles, as people who wield power, they are hardly worth addressing, any more than the worst tyrants and criminals, who are also human beings, however terrible their actions.

To speak truth to power is not a particularly honorable vocation. One should seek out an audience that matters -- and furthermore (another important qualification), it should not be seen as an audience, but as a community of common concern in which one hopes to participate constructively. We should not be speaking /to, but with.

That is second nature to any good teacher, and should be to any writer and intellectual as well.

Perhaps this is enough to suggest that even the question of choice of audience is not entirely trivial.

## CHAPTER FOUR GOALS AND VISIONS

In referring to goals and visions, I have in mind a practical rather than a very principled distinction. As is usual in human affairs, it is the practical perspective that matters most. Such theoretical understanding as we have is far too thin to carry much weight.

By visions, I mean the conception of a future society that animates what we actually do, a society in which a decent human being might want to live. By goals, I mean the choices and tasks that are within reach, that we will pursue one way or another guided by a vision that may be distant and hazy.

An animating vision must rest on some conception of human nature, of what's good for people, of their needs and rights, of the aspects of their nature that should be nurtured, encouraged and permitted to flourish for their benefit and that of others. The concept of human nature that underlies our visions is usually tacit and inchoate, but it is always there, perhaps implicitly, whether one chooses to leave things as they are and cultivate one's own garden, or to work for small changes, or for revolutionary ones.

This much, at least, is true of people who regard themselves as moral agents, not monsters -- who care about the effects of what they do or fail to do.

On all such matters, our knowledge and understanding are shallow; as in virtually every area of human life, we proceed on the basis of intuition and experience, hopes and fears. Goals involve hard choices with very serious

human consequences. We adopt them on the basis of imperfect evidence and limited understanding, and though our visions can and should be a guide, they are at best a very partial one. They are not clear, nor are they stable, at least for people who care about the consequences of their acts. Sensible people will look forward to a clearer articulation of their animating visions and to the critical evaluation of them in the light of reason and experience. So far, the substance is pretty meager, and there are no signs of any change in that state of affairs. Slogans are easy, but not very helpful when real choices have to be made.

### Goals versus Visions

Goals and visions can appear to be in conflict, and often are. There's no contradiction in that, as I think we all know from ordinary experience. Let me take my own case, to illustrate what I have in mind.

My personal visions are fairly traditional anarchist ones, with origins in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism. Before proceeding, I have to clarify what I mean by that. I do not mean the version of classical liberalism that has been reconstructed for ideological purposes, but the original, before it was broken on the rocks of rising industrial capitalism, as Rudolf Rocker put it in his work on anarchosyndicalism 60 years ago -- rather accurately, I think.

As state capitalism developed into the modern era, economic, political and ideological systems have increasingly been taken over by vast institutions of private tyranny that are about as close to the totalitarian ideal as any that humans have so far constructed.



"Within the corporation," political economist Robert Brady wrote half a century ago, "all policies emanate from the control above. In the union of this power to determine policy with the execution thereof, all authority necessarily proceeds from the top to the bottom and all responsibility from the bottom to the top. This is, of course, the inverse of 'democratic' control; it follows the structural conditions of dictatorial power."

[. . .]

When I speak of classical liberalism, I mean the ideas that were swept away, in considerable measure, by the rising tide of state capitalist autocracy. These ideas survived (or were re-invented) in various forms in the culture of resistance to new forms of oppression, serving as an animating vision for popular struggles that have considerably expanded the scope of freedom, justice, and rights. They were also taken up, adapted, and developed within libertarian left currents. According to this anarchist vision, any structure of hierarchy and authority carries a heavy burden of justification, whether it involves personal relations or a larger social order. If it cannot bear that burden -- and it sometimes can -- then it is illegitimate and should be dismantled. When honestly posed and squarely faced, that challenge can rarely be sustained. Genuine libertarians have their work cut out for them.

State power and private tyranny are prime examples at the outer limits, but the issues arise pretty much across the board: in relations among parents and children, teachers and students, men and women, those now alive and future generations that will be compelled to live with the results of what we do, indeed just about everywhere.

In particular, the anarchist vision, in almost every variety, has looked forward to the dismantling of state power. Personally, I share that vision, though it seems to run counter to my goals. Hence the tension to which I referred.

My short-term goals are to defend and even strengthen elements of state authority which, though illegitimate in fundamental ways, are critically necessary right now to impede the dedicated efforts to "roll back" the progress that has been achieved in extending democracy and human rights. State authority is now under severe attack in the more democratic societies, but not because it conflicts with the libertarian vision. Rather the opposite: because it offers (weak) protection to some aspects of that vision.

## C H A P T E R   F I V E   DEMOCRACY AND MARKETS IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

A good place to start is in Washington, right now. The standard picture is that a "historic political realignment" took place in the congressional elections of 1994 that swept Newt Gingrich and his army into power in a landslide victory, a "triumph of conservatism" that reflects the continuing "drift to the right." With their "overwhelming popular mandate," the Gingrich army will fulfil the promises of the Contract with America. They will "get government off our backs" so that we can return to the happy days when the free market reigned and restore "family values," ridding us of "the excesses of the welfare state" and the other residues of the failed "big government" policies of New Deal liberalism and the "Great Society." By dismantling the "nanny state," they will be able to "create jobs for Americans" and win security and freedom for the "middle class." And they will take over and successfully lead the crusade to establish the American Dream of free market democracy, worldwide.

That's the basic story. It has a familiar ring.

Ten years before, Ronald Reagan was re-elected in the second "conservative landslide" in four years. In the first, in 1980, Reagan won a bare majority of the popular vote and 28 percent of the electorate. Exit polls showed that the vote was not "for Reagan" but "against Carter" -- who had in fact initiated the policies that the Reaganites took up and implemented, with the general support of congressional Democrats: accelerated military spending (the state sector of the economy) and cutbacks in programs that serve the vast majority. Polls in 1980

revealed that 11 percent of Reagan voters chose him because "he's a real conservative" -- whatever that term is supposed to mean.

In 1984, there were great efforts to get out the vote, and they worked: it increased by 1 percent. The number of voters who supported Reagan as a "real conservative" dropped to 4 percent. A considerable majority of those who voted hoped that Reaganite legislative programs would not be enacted. Public opinion studies showed a continuation of the steady drift towards a kind of New Deal-style welfare state liberalism.

Why the votes? The concerns and desires of the public are not articulated in the political system -- one reason why voting is so sharply skewed towards privileged sectors.

When the interests of the privileged and powerful are the guiding commitment of both political factions, people who do not share these interests tend to stay home. William Dean Burnham, a leading specialist on electoral politics, pointed out that the class pattern of abstention "seems inseparably linked to another crucial comparative peculiarity of the American political system: the total absence of a socialist or laborite party as an organized competitor in the electoral market." That was fifteen years ago, and it has only become more pronounced as civil society has been even more effectively dismantled: unions, political organizations, and so on.

In the United States, "the interests of the bottom three-fifths of society" are not represented in the political system, political commentator Thomas Edsall of the Washington Post pointed out a decade ago, referring to

the Reagan elections. There are many consequences apart from the highly skewed voting pattern. One is that half the population thinks that both parties should be disbanded. Over 80 percent regard the economic system as "inherently unfair" and the government "run for the benefit of the few and the special interests, not the people" (up from a steady 50 percent for a similarly worded question in the pre-Reagan years) -- though what people might mean by "special interests" is another question. The same proportion think that workers have too little influence -- though only 20 percent feel that way about unions and 40 percent consider them too influential, another sign of the effects of the propaganda system in inducing confusion, if not in changing attitudes.

That brings us to 1994, the next in the series of "conservative landslides." Of the 38 percent of the electorate who took part, a bare majority voted Republican. "Republicans claimed about 52 percent of all votes cast for candidates in contested House seats, slightly better than a two-point improvement from 1992," when the Democrats won, the polling director of the Washington Post reported. One out of six voters described the outcome as "an affirmation of the Republican agenda." A "more conservative Congress" was considered an issue by a rousing 12 percent of the voters. An overwhelming majority had never heard of Gingrich's Contract with America, which articulated the Republican agenda and has since been relentlessly implemented, with much fanfare about the popular will, and less said about the fact that it is the first contract in history with only one party signing, and the other scarcely knowing of its existence.

When asked about the central components of the Contract, large majorities opposed almost all, notably the central one: large cuts in social spending. Over 60 percent of the population wanted to see such spending increased at the time of the elections. Gingrich himself was highly unpopular, even more than Clinton, whose ratings are very low; and that distaste has only persisted as the program has been implemented.

There was plenty of opposition to Democrats; the election was a "vote against." But it was nuanced. Clinton-style "New Democrats" -- in effect, moderate Republicans -- lost heavily, but not those who kept to the traditional liberal agenda and tried to activate the old Democratic coalition: the majority of the population who see themselves, correctly, as effectively disenfranchised.

Voting was even more heavily skewed toward the wealthy and privileged than before. Democrats were heavily preferred by those who earn less than \$30,000 a year (about the median) and ran even with Republicans in the \$30,000-\$50,000 range. The opinion profiles of non-voters were similar on major issues to those who voted the Democratic ticket. Voters who sensed a decline in their standard of living chose Republican -- or more accurately, opposed incumbent Democrats close to two to one. Most are white males with very uncertain economic futures, just the people who would have been part of a left-populist coalition committed to equitable economic growth and political democracy, were such an option to intrude into the business-run political arena. In its absence, many are turning to religious fanaticism, cults of every imaginable kind, paramilitary organizations ("militias"), and other forms of irrationality, an ominous development, with precedents

that we remember, and that now concern even the corporate executives who applaud the actions of the Gingrich army in its dedicated service to the most rich and privileged.

Nevertheless, despite the propaganda onslaught of the last half century, the general population has somehow maintained social democratic attitudes. Substantial majorities believe the government should assist people in need, and favor spending for health, education, help for the poor, and protection of the environment. As I've already mentioned, they also approve of foreign aid for the needy and peacekeeping operations. But policy follows a radically different course.

## C H A P T E R   S I X   THE MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT: ITS SOURCES AND CONTOURS

When the DOP [the September 1993 Declaration of Principles, the agreement between Israel and Arafat] was announced, knowledgeable observers recognized that it did not offer "even a hint of a solution to the basic problems which exist between Israel and the Palestinians," either in the short run or down the road (Israeli journalist Danny Rubinstein). Its operative meaning became still more clear after the May 1994 Cairo Agreement, which ensured that the territories administered by Arafat would remain "squarely within Israel's economic fold," as the Wall Street journal observed, and that the military administration would remain intact in all but name. The significance of the agreement was understood at once in Israel. Meron Benvenisti, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem and head of the West Bank Data Base Project, and one of the most astute observers in the Israeli mainstream for many years, commented that the Cairo Agreement, "much as it is difficult to trust one's own eyes when reading it, ...grants the Military Administration the exclusive authority in 'legislation, adjudication, policy execution,'" and "responsibility for the exercise of these powers in conformity with international law," which the US and Israel interpret as they please. "The entire intricate system of military ordinances...will retain its force, apart from 'such legislative regulatory and other powers Israel may expressly grant'" the Palestinians. Israeli judges retain "veto powers over any Palestinian legislation 'that might jeopardize major Israeli interests,'" which have "overriding power," and are interpreted as the US and Israel choose. Though subject to Israel's decisions on all matters of any significance, Palestinian authorities are



granted one domain as their own: they have "exclusive responsibility for anything done or not done," meaning that they agree to take upon themselves the debilitating costs of the 28-year occupation, from which Israel profited enormously, and to assume a continuing responsibility for Israel's security. This "agreement of surrender," Benvenisti observes, puts into effect the extremist 1981 proposals of Ariel Sharon, rejected then by Egypt.

After another Israel-Arafat agreement a year later, Benvenisti commented that "Arafat once again bowed his head before the infinitely stronger opponent." He reviewed the terms of the agreement, which left over half the West Bank under "absolute Israeli control" and the status of another 40 percent delayed for several years, during which time Israel can continue to use US aid to "create facts" in the routine manner. The agreement, Benvenisti notes, rescinds the provision of the DOP "that the West Bank will be considered 'one territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim stage.'" Little will change from the occupation period, he predicts, except that "Israeli control will become less direct: instead of running affairs up front, Israeli 'liaison officers' will run them via the clerks of the Palestinian Authority." Like Britain during its day in the sun, Israel will continue to rule behind "constitutional fictions." No innovation of course; that is the traditional pattern of the European conquest of most of the world.

The situation is even worse in Gaza, where the Israeli Security Services (Shabak) remain "an invisible but violent force whose shadowy presence is always felt, wielding a fateful power over Gazans' lives," Haaretz correspondent Amira Hass reports, adding that Israeli

authorities continue to control the economy as well. Since 1991, Graham Usher elaborates, Israel has redirected Gaza's traditional fruit and vegetable production to ornamentals and flowers by various punitive measures, including reduction of arable citrus land by almost a third through confiscations. The goal is only in part to remove valuable territory from eventual Arab control. Israel also intends "to decouple Gaza's trade with other economies, the better to lock it into Israel's own." Export from these single-crop sectors is in the hands of Israeli contractors, and very low labor costs in the demoralized Gaza Strip allow Israeli entrepreneurs to maintain their European markets at substantial profit.

By summer 1995, 95 percent of the population of the Gaza population was "imprisoned within the region" by Israeli force, the Israeli human rights group Tsevet 'aza reports, with the "economy strangled" and security forces controlling trade, export, and communications, often seeking to "produce harsher conditions for the Palestinians." Under these conditions, few are willing to face the hazards of investment, at least outside the industrial parks set up by Israeli manufacturers to "exploit the cheap labor of Palestinians." They report further that Israel continues to refuse to allow Palestinian investors to open small productive facilities, and that fishermen are kept to six kilometers from the coast, where there are no fish during the summer months. The limited water supplies in this very arid region are used for intensive Israeli agriculture, even artificial lakes at elegant resorts, visitors report. Meanwhile water supplies to Palestinians in Gaza have been cut in half since the Oslo Accords, UN human rights investigator Rene Felber wrote in a harshly critical report on prison conditions and water policy. He resigned shortly after,

commenting that it is pointless to issue reports that go into the wastebasket.

A year after the DOP, Israel's control of West Bank land reached about 75 percent, up from 65 percent when the accords were signed. Establishment and "thickening" of settlements also continued at a rapid pace, along with the construction of "bypass roads" that integrate the Jewish settlements into Israel proper, leaving Arab villages cut off from one another and from the urban centers that Israel prefers to relinquish to Palestinian administration. The highway projects are immense, with costs expected to be about \$400 million, according to the Secretary-General of the governing Labor Party. The purpose is to provide settlers with what one calls "a road where I don't have to see Arabs all around me." Details are secret, but "outlines are emerging from settlers' maps," correspondent Barton Gellman reports, including the usual method of quietly putting "the force of Israeli law" behind projects "begun illegally by the settlers." Benvenisti describes the roads as "political facts that have long-term consequences" within the plan to "cut the Arab areas into boxes, making laagers (encircled camps) out of the West Bank," part of "a victor's peace, a diktat."

## CHAPTER SEVEN THE GREAT POWERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE CASE OF EAST TIMOR

I've been asked to speak about the great powers and human rights. That's actually a very brief talk.

There are two versions of the story. The official one is familiar: upholding human rights is our highest goal, even "the Soul of our foreign policy," as President Carter put it. And if we are at all at fault, it is in maintaining this noble standard too rigorously, to the detriment of the famous "national interest."

A second version is given by the events of history and the internal record of planning. It was outlined with admirable frankness in an important state paper of 1948 (PPS 23) written by one of the architects of the New World Order of the day, the head of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, the respected statesman and scholar George Kennan. In the course of assigning each region of the world its proper role within the overarching framework of American power, he observed that the basic policy goal is to maintain the "position of disparity" that separates our enormous wealth from the poverty of others; and to achieve that goal "We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization," recognizing that we must "deal in straight power concepts," not "hampered by idealistic slogans" about "altruism and world-benefaction."

## C H A P T E R   E I G H T   E A S T   T I M O R   A N D W O R L D   O R D E R

It has repeatedly been argued here that Indonesia cannot [allow self-determination for East Timor] for fear of strengthening separatist movements or perhaps national honor, the same arguments put forth to justify Russia's hold on the Baltic countries, or its current vicious assault on Chechnya, to mention merely two examples of an infamous list. In any such cases, the issues are not trivial, and include complex questions of value and judgment about federalism and independence or centralization of state power. Each case has to be looked at on its merits; the arguments in the present case are hardly impressive. The proper role of outsiders is to try, as much as possible, to help the affected people gain the right and power to make their own decisions -- the affected people, not their autocratic rulers, or foreign investors, or the "principal architects of policy" in our own countries. The rule of outsiders is surely not to pre-empt that choice by firmly placing the boot on the necks of suffering people.

It is also not the role of outsiders to affect a high moral stand, as when a Douglas Hurd -- of all people -- solemnly explains that the West cannot "export Western values [on human rights] to developing nations," values that the Third World has learned all about well enough, thank you. As for denunciations of others for their crimes, there are not too many people, and no institutions of power, that are in a very strong position to take such a stance.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that we should look primarily at ourselves. In 1980, the US press finally

did begin to give some recognition to what had happened in East Timor, after four terrible years. The New York Times had a powerful editorial entitled "The Shaming of Indonesia." I wrote a letter, which they would not publish though some NGOs did, suggesting that the title and thrust of the editorial should have been "the shaming of the United States" (or the shaming of the New York Times, though I didn't suggest that, in the vain hope of passing through those august portals). We have our own crimes to consider in the case of East Timor, serious and critical ones, and we are hardly in a position to issue a blanket condemnation of Indonesia, whose people had no way to find out what was going on, and did not, with a few exceptions like George Aditjondro, who needs no lectures from us.

The point generalizes, but I won't elaborate. The implications seem obvious.

I'll wind up by reiterating something that should also be obvious. I have been speaking of one of the great crimes of the modern era, one in which we have had and still have a primary role. It is also one of the easier cases to resolve, in world affairs. The piece of gravel [as Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas once called East Timor] can be removed, and we could help ease the way, if we so choose.

## **NOTES ON ANARCHISM**

**NOAM CHOMSKY, 1970**

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A French writer, sympathetic to anarchism, wrote in the 1890s that "anarchism has a broad back, like paper it endures anything" -- including, he noted those whose acts are such that "a mortal enemy of anarchism could not have done better."<sup>1</sup> There have been many styles of thought and action that have been referred to as "anarchist." It would be hopeless to try to encompass all of these conflicting tendencies in some general theory or ideology. And even if we proceed to extract from the history of libertarian thought a living, evolving tradition, as Daniel Guérin does in *Anarchism*, it remains difficult to formulate its doctrines as a specific and determinate theory of society and social change. The anarchist historian Rudolph Rocker, who presents a systematic conception of the development of anarchist thought towards anarchosyndicalism, along lines that bear comparison to Guérin's work, puts the matter well when he writes that anarchism is not a fixed, self-enclosed social system but rather a definite trend in the historic development of mankind, which, in contrast with the intellectual guardianship of all clerical and governmental institutions, strives for the free unhindered unfolding of all the individual and social forces in life. Even freedom is only a relative, not an absolute concept, since it tends constantly to become broader and to affect wider circles in more manifold ways. For the anarchist, freedom is not

an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all the powers, capacities, and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account. The less this natural development of man is influenced by ecclesiastical or political guardianship, the more efficient and harmonious will human personality become, the more will it become the measure of the intellectual culture of the society in which it has grown.<sup>2</sup>

One might ask what value there is in studying a "definite trend in the historic development of mankind" that does not articulate a specific and detailed social theory. Indeed, many commentators dismiss anarchism as utopian, formless, primitive, or otherwise incompatible with the realities of a complex society. One might, however, argue rather differently: that at every stage of history our concern must be to dismantle those forms of authority and oppression that survive from an era when they might have been justified in terms of the need for security or survival or economic development, but that now contribute to -- rather than alleviate -- material and cultural deficit. If so, there will be no doctrine of social change fixed for the present and future, nor even, necessarily, a specific and unchanging concept of the goals towards which social change should tend. Surely our understanding of the nature of man or of the range of viable social forms is so rudimentary that any far-reaching doctrine must be treated with great skepticism, just as skepticism is in order when we hear that "human nature" or "the demands of efficiency" or "the complexity of modern life" requires this or that form of oppression and autocratic rule.



Nevertheless, at a particular time there is every reason to develop, insofar as our understanding permits, a specific realization of this definite trend in the historic development of mankind, appropriate to the tasks of the moment. For Rocker, "the problem that is set for our time is that of freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement"; and the method is not the conquest and exercise of state power, nor stultifying parliamentarianism, but rather "to reconstruct the economic life of the peoples from the ground up and build it up in the spirit of Socialism."

But only the producers themselves are fitted for this task, since they are the only value-creating element in society out of which a new future can arise. Theirs must be the task of freeing labor from all the fetters which economic exploitation has fastened on it, of freeing society from all the institutions and procedure of political power, and of opening the way to an alliance of free groups of men and women based on co-operative labor and a planned administration of things in the interest of the community. To prepare the toiling masses in the city and country for this great goal and to bind them together as a militant force is the objective of modern Anarcho-syndicalism, and in this its whole purpose is exhausted. [P. 108]

As a socialist, Rocker would take for granted "that the serious, final, complete liberation of the workers is possible only upon one condition: that of the appropriation of capital, that is, of raw material and all the tools of labor, including land, by the whole body of the workers."<sup>3</sup> As an anarchosyndicalist, he insists, further, that the workers' organizations create "not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself" in the prerevolutionary period, that they embody in themselves

the structure of the future society -- and he looks forward to a social revolution that will dismantle the state apparatus as well as expropriate the expropriators. "What we put in place of the government is industrial organization."

Anarcho-syndicalists are convinced that a Socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of a government, but only by the solidaric collaboration of the workers with hand and brain in each special branch of production; that is, through the taking over of the management of all plants by the producers themselves under such form that the separate groups, plants, and branches of industry are independent members of the general economic organism and systematically carry on production and the distribution of the products in the interest of the community on the basis of free mutual agreements. [p. 94]

Rocker was writing at a moment when such ideas had been put into practice in a dramatic way in the Spanish Revolution. Just prior to the outbreak of the revolution, the anarchosyndicalist economist Diego Abad de Santillan had written:

...in facing the problem of social transformation, the Revolution cannot consider the state as a medium, but must depend on the organization of producers.

We have followed this norm and we find no need for the hypothesis of a superior power to organized labor, in order to establish a new order of things. We would thank anyone to point out to us what function, if any, the State can have in an economic organization, where private property has been abolished and in which parasitism and

special privilege have no place. The suppression of the State cannot be a languid affair; it must be the task of the Revolution to finish with the State. Either the Revolution gives social wealth to the producers in which case the producers organize themselves for due collective distribution and the State has nothing to do; or the Revolution does not give social wealth to the producers, in which case the Revolution has been a lie and the State would continue.

Our federal council of economy is not a political power but an economic and administrative regulating power. It receives its orientation from below and operates in accordance with the resolutions of the regional and national assemblies. It is a liaison corps and nothing else.<sup>4</sup>

Engels, in a letter of 1883, expressed his disagreement with this conception as follows:

The anarchists put the thing upside down. They declare that the proletarian revolution must begin by doing away with the political organization of the state....But to destroy it at such a moment would be to destroy the only organism by means of which the victorious proletariat can assert its newly-conquered power, hold down its capitalist adversaries, and carry out that economic revolution of society without which the whole victory must end in a new defeat and a mass slaughter of the workers similar to those after the Paris commune.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, the anarchists -- most eloquently Bakunin -- warned of the dangers of the "red bureaucracy," which would prove to be "the most vile and terrible lie that our century has created."<sup>6</sup> The anarchosyndicalist Fernand

Pelloutier asked: "Must even the transitory state to which we have to submit necessarily and fatally be a collectivist jail? Can't it consist in a free organization limited exclusively by the needs of production and consumption, all political institutions having disappeared?"<sup>7</sup>

I do not pretend to know the answers to this question. But it seems clear that unless there is, in some form, a positive answer, the chances for a truly democratic revolution that will achieve the humanistic ideals of the left are not great. Martin Buber put the problem succinctly when he wrote: "One cannot in the nature of things expect a little tree that has been turned into a club to put forth leaves."<sup>8</sup> The question of conquest or destruction of state power is what Bakunin regarded as the primary issue dividing him from Marx.<sup>9</sup> In one form or another, the problem has arisen repeatedly in the century since, dividing "libertarian" from "authoritarian" socialists.

Despite Bakunin's warnings about the red bureaucracy, and their fulfillment under Stalin's dictatorship, it would obviously be a gross error in interpreting the debates of a century ago to rely on the claims of contemporary social movements as to their historical origins. In particular, it is perverse to regard Bolshevism as "Marxism in practice." Rather, the left-wing critique of Bolshevism, taking account of the historical circumstances surrounding the Russian Revolution, is far more to the point.<sup>10</sup>

The anti-Bolshevik, left-wing labor movement opposed the Leninists because they did not go far enough in exploiting the Russian upheavals for strictly proletarian

ends. They became prisoners of their environment and used the international radical movement to satisfy specifically Russian needs, which soon became synonymous with the needs of the Bolshevik Party-State. The "bourgeois" aspects of the Russian Revolution were now discovered in Bolshevism itself: Leninism was adjudged a part of international social-democracy, differing from the latter only on tactical issues.<sup>11</sup>

If one were to seek a single leading idea within the anarchist tradition, it should, I believe, be that expressed by Bakunin when, in writing on the Paris Commune, he identified himself as follows:

I am a fanatic lover of liberty, considering it as the unique condition under which intelligence, dignity and human happiness can develop and grow; not the purely formal liberty conceded, measured out and regulated by the State, an eternal lie which in reality represents nothing more than the privilege of some founded on the slavery of the rest; not the individualistic, egoistic, shabby, and fictitious liberty extolled by the School of J.-J. Rousseau and other schools of bourgeois liberalism, which considers the would-be rights of all men, represented by the State which limits the rights of each -- an idea that leads inevitably to the reduction of the rights of each to zero. No, I mean the only kind of liberty that is worthy of the name, liberty that consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers that are latent in each person; liberty that recognizes no restrictions other than those determined by the laws of our own individual nature, which cannot properly be regarded as restrictions since these laws are not imposed by any outside legislator beside or above us, but are immanent and inherent, forming the very basis of

our material, intellectual and moral being -- they do not limit us but are the real and immediate conditions of our freedom.<sup>12</sup>

These ideas grew out of the Enlightenment; their roots are in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Humboldt's *Limits of State Action*, Kant's insistence, in his defense of the French Revolution, that freedom is the precondition for acquiring the maturity for freedom, not a gift to be granted when such maturity is achieved. With the development of industrial capitalism, a new and unanticipated system of injustice, it is libertarian socialism that has preserved and extended the radical humanist message of the Enlightenment and the classical liberal ideals that were perverted into an ideology to sustain the emerging social order. In fact, on the very same assumptions that led classical liberalism to oppose the intervention of the state in social life, capitalist social relations are also intolerable. This is clear, for example, from the classic work of Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, which anticipated and perhaps inspired Mill. This classic of liberal thought, completed in 1792, is in its essence profoundly, though prematurely, anticapitalist. Its ideas must be attenuated beyond recognition to be transmuted into an ideology of industrial capitalism.

Humboldt's vision of a society in which social fetters are replaced by social bonds and labor is freely undertaken suggests the early Marx., with his discussion of the "alienation of labor when work is external to the worker...not part of his nature...[so that] he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself...[and is] physically exhausted and mentally debased," alienated labor that "casts some of the workers back into a

barbarous kind of work and turns others into machines," thus depriving man of his "species character" of "free conscious activity" and "productive life." Similarly, Marx conceives of "a new type of human being who needs his fellow men....[The workers' association becomes] the real constructive effort to create the social texture of future human relations."<sup>13</sup> It is true that classical libertarian thought is opposed to state intervention in social life, as a consequence of deeper assumptions about the human need for liberty, diversity, and free association. On the same assumptions, capitalist relations of production, wage labor, competitiveness, the ideology of "possessive individualism" -- all must be regarded as fundamentally antihuman. Libertarian socialism is properly to be regarded as the inheritor of the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment.

Rudolf Rocker describes modern anarchism as "the confluence of the two great currents which during and since the French revolution have found such characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: Socialism and Liberalism." The classical liberal ideals, he argues, were wrecked on the realities of capitalist economic forms. Anarchism is necessarily anticapitalist in that it "opposes the exploitation of man by man." But anarchism also opposes "the dominion of man over man." It insists that "socialism will be free or it will not be at all. In its recognition of this lies the genuine and profound justification for the existence of anarchism."<sup>14</sup> From this point of view, anarchism may be regarded as the libertarian wing of socialism. It is in this spirit that Daniel Guérin has approached the study of anarchism in *Anarchism* and other works.<sup>15</sup> Guérin quotes Adolph Fischer, who said that "every anarchist is a socialist but not every socialist is necessarily an

anarchist." Similarly Bakunin, in his "anarchist manifesto" of 1865, the program of his projected international revolutionary fraternity, laid down the principle that each member must be, to begin with, a socialist.

A consistent anarchist must oppose private ownership of the means of production and the wage slavery which is a component of this system, as incompatible with the principle that labor must be freely undertaken and under the control of the producer. As Marx put it, socialists look forward to a society in which labor will "become not only a means of life, but also the highest want in life,"<sup>16</sup> an impossibility when the worker is driven by external authority or need rather than inner impulse: "no form of wage-labor, even though one may be less obnoxious than another, can do away with the misery of wage-labor itself."<sup>17</sup> A consistent anarchist must oppose not only alienated labor but also the stupefying specialization of labor that takes place when the means for developing production

mutilate the worker into a fragment of a human being, degrade him to become a mere appurtenance of the machine, make his work such a torment that its essential meaning is destroyed; estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in very proportion to the extent to which science is incorporated into it as an independent power...<sup>18</sup>

Marx saw this not as an inevitable concomitant of industrialization, but rather as a feature of capitalist relations of production. The society of the future must be concerned to "replace the detail-worker of today...reduced to a mere fragment of a man, by the fully



developed individual, fit for a variety of labours...to whom the different social functions...are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural powers."<sup>19</sup> The prerequisite is the abolition of capital and wage labor as social categories (not to speak of the industrial armies of the "labor state" or the various modern forms of totalitarianism since capitalism). The reduction of man to an appurtenance of the machine, a specialized tool of production, might in principle be overcome, rather than enhanced, with the proper development and use of technology, but not under the conditions of autocratic control of production by those who make man an instrument to serve their ends, overlooking his individual purposes, in Humboldt's phrase.

Anarchosyndicalists sought, even under capitalism, to create "free associations of free producers" that would engage in militant struggle and prepare to take over the organization of production on a democratic basis. These associations would serve as "a practical school of anarchism."<sup>20</sup> If private ownership of the means of production is, in Proudhon's often quoted phrase, merely a form of "theft" -- "the exploitation of the weak by the strong"<sup>21</sup> -- control of production by a state bureaucracy, no matter how benevolent its intentions, also does not create the conditions under which labor, manual and intellectual, can become the highest want in life. Both, then, must be overcome.

In his attack on the right of private or bureaucratic control over the means of production,, the anarchist takes his stand with those who struggle to bring about "the third and last emancipatory phase of history," the first having made serfs out of slaves, the second having made

wage earners out of serfs, and the third which abolishes the proletariat in a final act of liberation that places control over the economy in the hands of free and voluntary associations of producers (Fourier, 1848).<sup>22</sup> The imminent danger to "civilization" was noted by de Tocqueville, also in 1848:

As long as the right of property was the origin and groundwork of many other rights, it was easily defended -- or rather it was not attacked; it was then the citadel of society while all the other rights were its outworks; it did not bear the brunt of attack and, indeed, there was no serious attempt to assail it. but today, when the right of property is regarded as the last undestroyed remnant of the aristocratic world, when it alone is left standing, the sole privilege in an equalized society, it is a different matter. Consider what is happening in the hearts of the working-classes, although I admit they are quiet as yet. It is true that they are less inflamed than formerly by political passions properly speaking; but do you not see that their passions, far from being political, have become social? Do you not see that, little by little, ideas and opinions are spreading amongst them which aim not merely at removing such and such laws, such a ministry or such a government, but at breaking up the very foundations of society itself?<sup>23</sup>

The workers of Paris, in 1871, broke the silence, and proceeded

to abolish property, the basis of all civilization! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a

truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor, into mere instruments of free and associated labor.<sup>24</sup>

The Commune, of course, was drowned in blood. The nature of the "civilization" that the workers of Paris sought to overcome in their attack on "the very foundations of society itself" was revealed, once again, when the troops of the Versailles government reconquered Paris from its population. As Marx wrote, bitterly but accurately:

The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge...the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization of which they are the mercenary vindicators....The bourgeoisie of the whole world, which looks complacently upon the wholesale massacre after the battle, is convulsed by horror at the destruction of brick and mortar. [Ibid., pp. 74, 77]

Despite the violent destruction of the Commune, Bakunin wrote that Paris opens a new era, "that of the definitive and complete emancipation of the popular masses and their future true solidarity, across and despite state boundaries...the next revolution of man, international in solidarity, will be the resurrection of Paris" -- a revolution that the world still awaits.

The consistent anarchist, then, should be a socialist, but a socialist of a particular sort. He will not only oppose alienated and specialized labor and look forward to the

appropriation of capital by the whole body of workers, but he will also insist that this appropriation be direct, not exercised by some elite force acting in the name of the proletariat. He will, in short, oppose

the organization of production by the Government. It means State-socialism, the command of the State officials over production and the command of managers, scientists, shop-officials in the shop....The goal of the working class is liberation from exploitation. This goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting itself for the bourgeoisie. It is only realized by the workers themselves being master over production.

These remarks are taken from "Five Theses on the Class Struggle" by the left-wing Marxist Anton Pannekoek, one of the outstanding left theorists of the council communist movement. And in fact, radical Marxism merges with anarchist currents.

As a further illustration, consider the following characterization of "revolutionary Socialism":

The revolutionary Socialist denies that State ownership can end in anything other than a bureaucratic despotism. We have seen why the State cannot democratically control industry. Industry can only be democratically owned and controlled by the workers electing directly from their own ranks industrial administrative committees. Socialism will be fundamentally an industrial system; its constituencies will be of an industrial character. Thus those carrying on the social activities and industries of society will be directly represented in the local and central councils of social

administration. In this way the powers of such delegates will flow upwards from those carrying on the work and conversant with the needs of the community. When the central administrative industrial committee meets it will represent every phase of social activity. Hence the capitalist political or geographical state will be replaced by the industrial administrative committee of Socialism. The transition from the one social system to the other will be the social revolution. The political State throughout history has meant the government of men by ruling classes; the Republic of Socialism will be the government of industry administered on behalf of the whole community. The former meant the economic and political subjection of the many; the latter will mean the economic freedom of all -- it will be, therefore, a true democracy.

This programmatic statement appears in William Paul's *The State, its Origins and Functions*, written in early 1917 -- shortly before Lenin's *State and Revolution*, perhaps his most libertarian work (see note 9). Paul was a member of the Marxist-De Leonist Socialist Labor Party and later one of the founders of the British Communist Party.<sup>25</sup> His critique of state socialism resembles the libertarian doctrine of the anarchists in its principle that since state ownership and management will lead to bureaucratic despotism, the social revolution must replace it by the industrial organization of society with direct workers' control. Many similar statements can be cited.

What is far more important is that these ideas have been realized in spontaneous revolutionary action, for example in Germany and Italy after World War I and in Spain (not only in the agricultural countryside, but also

in industrial Barcelona) in 1936. One might argue that some form of council communism is the natural form of revolutionary socialism in an industrial society. It reflects the intuitive understanding that democracy is severely limited when the industrial system is controlled by any form of autocratic elite, whether of owners, managers and technocrats, a "vanguard" party, or a state bureaucracy. Under these conditions of authoritarian domination the classical libertarian ideals developed further by Marx and Bakunin and all true revolutionaries cannot be realized; man will not be free to develop his own potentialities to their fullest, and the producer will remain "a fragment of a human being," degraded, a tool in the productive process directed from above.

The phrase "spontaneous revolutionary action" can be misleading. The anarchosyndicalists, at least, took very seriously Bakunin's remark that the workers' organizations must create "not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself" in the prerevolutionary period. The accomplishments of the popular revolution in Spain, in particular, were based on the patient work of many years of organization and education, one component of a long tradition of commitment and militancy. The resolutions of the Madrid Congress of June 1931 and the Saragossa Congress in May 1936 foreshadowed in many ways the acts of the revolution, as did the somewhat different ideas sketched by Santillan (see note 4) in his fairly specific account of the social and economic organization to be instituted by the revolution. Guérin writes "The Spanish revolution was relatively mature in the minds of libertarian thinkers, as in the popular consciousness." And workers' organizations existed with the structure, the experience, and the understanding to undertake the task of social reconstruction when, with

the Franco coup, the turmoil of early 1936 exploded into social revolution. In his introduction to a collection of documents on collectivization in Spain, the anarchist Augustin Souchy writes:

For many years, the anarchists and the syndicalists of Spain considered their supreme task to be the social transformation of the society. In their assemblies of Syndicates and groups, in their journals, their brochures and books, the problem of the social revolution was discussed incessantly and in a systematic fashion.<sup>26</sup>

All of this lies behind the spontaneous achievements, the constructive work of the Spanish Revolution.

The ideas of libertarian socialism, in the sense described, have been submerged in the industrial societies of the past half-century. The dominant ideologies have been those of state socialism or state capitalism (of increasingly militarized character in the United States, for reasons that are not obscure).<sup>27</sup> But there has been a rekindling of interest in the past few years. The theses I quoted by Anton Pannekoek were taken from a recent pamphlet of a radical French workers' group (*Informations Correspondance Ouvrière*). The remarks by William Paul on revolutionary socialism are cited in a paper by Walter Kendall given at the National Conference on Workers' Control in Sheffield, England, in March 1969. The workers' control movement has become a significant force in England in the past few years. It has organized several conferences and has produced a substantial pamphlet literature, and counts among its active adherents representatives of some of the most important trade unions. The Amalgamated Engineering and Foundryworkers' Union, for example,

has adopted, as official policy, the program of nationalization of basic industries under "workers' control at all levels."<sup>28</sup> On the Continent, there are similar developments. May 1968 of course accelerated the growing interest in council communism and related ideas in France and Germany, as it did in England.

Given the highly conservative cast of our highly ideological society, it is not too surprising that the United States has been relatively untouched by these developments. But that too may change. The erosion of cold-war mythology at least makes it possible to raise these questions in fairly broad circles. If the present wave of repression can be beaten back, if the left can overcome its more suicidal tendencies and build upon what has been accomplished in the past decade, then the problem of how to organize industrial society on truly democratic lines, with democratic control in the workplace and in the community, should become a dominant intellectual issue for those who are alive to the problems of contemporary society, and, as a mass movement for libertarian socialism develops, speculation should proceed to action.

In his manifesto of 1865, Bakunin predicted that one element in the social revolution will be "that intelligent and truly noble part of youth which, though belonging by birth to the privileged classes, in its generous convictions and ardent aspirations, adopts the cause of the people." Perhaps in the rise of the student movement of the 1960s one sees steps towards a fulfillment of this prophecy.

Daniel Guérin has undertaken what he has described as a "process of rehabilitation" of anarchism. He argues, convincingly I believe, that "the constructive ideas of



anarchism retain their vitality, that they may, when re-examined and sifted, assist contemporary socialist thought to undertake a new departure...[and] contribute to enriching Marxism."<sup>29</sup> From the "broad back" of anarchism he has selected for more intensive scrutiny those ideas and actions that can be described as libertarian socialist. This is natural and proper. This framework accommodates the major anarchist spokesmen as well as the mass actions that have been animated by anarchist sentiments and ideals. Guérin is concerned not only with anarchist thought but also with the spontaneous actions of popular revolutionary struggle. He is concerned with social as well as intellectual creativity. Furthermore, he attempts to draw from the constructive achievements of the past lessons that will enrich the theory of social liberation. For those who wish not only to understand the world, but also to change it, this is the proper way to study the history of anarchism.

Guérin describes the anarchism of the nineteenth century as essentially doctrinal, while the twentieth century, for the anarchists, has been a time of "revolutionary practice."<sup>30</sup> Anarchism reflects that judgment. His interpretation of anarchism consciously points toward the future. Arthur Rosenberg once pointed out that popular revolutions characteristically seek to replace "a feudal or centralized authority ruling by force" with some form of communal system which "implies the destruction and disappearance of the old form of State." Such a system will be either socialist or an "extreme form of democracy...[which is] the preliminary condition for Socialism inasmuch as Socialism can only be realized in a world enjoying the highest possible measure of individual freedom." This ideal, he notes, was

common to Marx and the anarchists.<sup>31</sup> This natural struggle for liberation runs counter to the prevailing tendency towards centralization in economic and political life.

A century ago Marx wrote that the workers of Paris "felt there was but one alternative -- the Commune, or the empire -- under whatever name it might reappear."

The empire had ruined them economically by the havoc it made of public wealth, by the wholesale financial swindling it fostered, by the props it lent to the artificially accelerated centralization of capital, and the concomitant expropriation of their own ranks. It had suppressed them politically, it had shocked them morally by its orgies, it had insulted their Voltairianism by handing over the education of their children to the frères Ignorantins, it had revolted their national feeling as Frenchmen by precipitating them headlong into a war which left only one equivalent for the ruins it made -- the disappearance of the empire.<sup>32</sup>

The miserable Second Empire "was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation."

It is not very difficult to rephrase these remarks so that they become appropriate to the imperial systems of 1970. The problem of "freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement" remains the problem of our time. As long as this is so, the doctrines and the revolutionary practice of libertarian socialism will serve as an inspiration and guide.

Notes

This essay is a revised version of the introduction to Daniel Guérin's *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*. In a slightly different version, it appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, May 21, 1970.

1 Octave Mirbeau, quoted in James Joll, *The Anarchists*, pp. 145-6.

2 Rudolf Rocker, *Anarchosyndicalism*, p. 31.

3 Cited by Rocker, *ibid.*, p. 77. This quotation and that in the next sentence are from Michael Bakunin, "The Program of the Alliance," in Sam Dolgoff, ed. and trans., *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p. 255.

4 Diego Abad de Santillan, *After the Revolution*, p. 86. In the last chapter, written several months after the revolution had begun, he expresses his dissatisfaction with what had so far been achieved along these lines. On the accomplishments of the social revolution in Spain, see my *American Power and the New Mandarins*, chap. 1, and references cited there; the important study by Broué and Témime has since been translated into English. Several other important studies have appeared since, in particular: Frank Mintz, *L'Autogestion dans l'Espagne révolutionnaire* (Paris: Editions Bélibaste, 1971); César M. Lorenzo, *Les Anarchistes espagnols et le pouvoir, 1868-1969* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969); Gaston Leval, *Espagne libertaire, 1936-1939: L'Oeuvre constructive de la Révolution espagnole* (Paris: Editions du Cercle, 1971). See also Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, enlarged 1972 edition.

5 Cited by Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, in his discussion of Marxism and anarchism.

6 Bakunin, in a letter to Herzen and Ogareff, 1866. Cited by Daniel Guérin, *Jeunesse du socialisme libertaire*, p. 119.

7 Fernand Pelloutier, cited in Joll, *Anarchists*. The source is "L'Anarchisme et les syndicats ouvriers," *Les Temps nouveaux*, 1895. The full text appears in Daniel Guérin, ed., *Ni Dieu, ni Maître*, an excellent historical anthology of anarchism.

8 Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, p. 127.

9 "No state, however democratic," Bakunin wrote, "not even the reddest republic – can ever give the people what they really want, i.e., the free self-organization and administration of their own affairs from the bottom upward, without any interference or violence from above, because every state, even the pseudo-People's State concocted by Mr. Marx, is in essence

only a machine ruling the masses from above, from a privileged minority of conceited intellectuals, who imagine that they know what the people need and want better than do the people themselves...." "But the people will feel no better if the stick with which they are being beaten is labeled 'the people's stick' " (Statism and Anarchy [1873], in Dolgoff, Bakunin on Anarchy, p. 338) – "the people's stick" being the democratic Republic.

Marx, of course, saw the matter differently.

For discussion of the impact of the Paris Commune on this dispute, see Daniel Guérin's comments in *Ni Dieu, ni Maître*; these also appear, slightly extended, in his *Pour un marxisme libertaire*. See also note 24.

10 On Lenin's "intellectual deviation" to the left during 1917, see Robert Vincent Daniels, "The State and Revolution: a Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology," *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1953).

11 Paul Mattick, *Marx and Keynes*, p. 295.

12 Michael Bakunin, "La Commune de Paris et la notion de l'état," reprinted in Guérin, *Ni Dieu, ni Maître*. Bakunin's final remark on the laws of individual nature as the condition of freedom can be compared to the creative thought developed in the rationalist and romantic traditions. See my *Cartesian Linguistics and Language and Mind*.

13 Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, p. 142, referring to comments in *The Holy Family*. Avineri states that within the socialist movement only the Israeli kibbutzim "have perceived that the modes and forms of present social organization will determine the structure of future society." This, however, was a characteristic position of anarchosyndicalism, as noted earlier.

14 Rucker, *Anarchosyndicalism*, p. 28.

15 See Guérin's works cited earlier.

16 Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

17 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, cited by Mattick, *Marx and Keynes*, p. 306. In this connection, see also Mattick's essay "Workers' Control," in Priscilla Long, ed., *The New Left*; and Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Marx*.

18 Karl Marx, *Capital*, quoted by Robert Tucker, who rightly emphasizes that Marx sees the revolutionary more as a "frustrated producer" than a "dissatisfied consumer" (*The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*). This more radical critique of capitalist relations of production is a direct outgrowth of the libertarian thought of the Enlightenment.

- 19 Marx, *Capital*, cited by Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Marx*, p. 83.
- 20 Pelloutier, "L'Anarchisme."
- 21 "Qu'est-ce que la propriété?" The phrase "property is theft" displeased Marx, who saw in its use a logical problem, theft presupposing the legitimate existence of property. See Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Marx*.
- 22 Cited in Buber's *Paths in Utopia*, p. 19.
- 23 Cited in J. Hampden Jackson, *Marx, Proudhon and European Socialism*, p. 60.
- 24 Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, p. 24. Avineri observes that this and other comments of Marx about the Commune refer pointedly to intentions and plans. As Marx made plain elsewhere, his considered assessment was more critical than in this address.
- 25 For some background, see Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*.
- 26 *Collectivisations: L'Oeuvre constructive de la Révolution espagnole*, p. 8.
- 27 For discussion, see Mattick, *Marx and Keynes*, and Michael Kidron, *Western Capitalism Since the War*. See also discussion and references cited in my *At War With Asia*, chap. 1, pp. 23-6.
- 28 See Hugh Scanlon, *The Way Forward for Workers' Control*. Scanlon is the president of the AEF, one of Britain's largest trade unions. The institute was established as a result of the sixth Conference on Workers' Control, March 1968, and serves as a center for disseminating information and encouraging research.
- 29 Guérin, *Ni Dieu, ni Maître*, introduction.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Arthur Rosenberg, *A History of Bolshevism*, p. 88.
- 32 Marx, *Civil War in France*, pp. 62-3.

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## **FORCE AND OPINION**

**NOAM CHOMSKY**

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This essay is an edited version of the conclusion to Chomsky's *Detering Democracy*, (<http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/dd/dd.html>) which is itself a compilation of edited versions of articles that have appeared in Z.

In his study of the Scottish intellectual tradition, George Davie identifies its central theme as a recognition of the fundamental role of "natural beliefs or principles of common sense, such as the belief in an independent external world, the belief in causality, the belief in ideal standards, and the belief in the self of conscience as separate from the rest of one." These principles are sometimes considered to have a regulative character; though never fully justified, they provide the foundations for thought and conception. Some held that they contain "an irreducible element of mystery," Davie points out, while others hoped to provide a rational foundation for them. On that issue, the jury is still out.

We can trace such ideas to 17th century thinkers who reacted to the skeptical crisis of the times by recognizing that there are no absolutely certain grounds for knowledge, but that we do, nevertheless, have ways to gain a reliable understanding of the world and to improve that understanding and apply it -- essentially the standpoint of the working scientist today. Similarly, in normal life a reasonable person relies on the natural



beliefs of common sense while recognizing that they may be parochial or misguided, and hoping to refine or alter them as understanding progresses.

Davie credits David Hume with providing this particular cast to Scottish philosophy, and more generally, having taught philosophy the proper questions to ask. One puzzle that Hume posed is particularly pertinent today. In considering the First Principles of Government, Hume found "nothing more surprising" than "to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."

Hume was an astute observer, and his paradox of government is much to the point. His insight explains why elites are so dedicated to indoctrination and thought control, a major and largely neglected theme of modern history. "The public must be put in its place," Walter Lippmann wrote, so that we may "live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd," whose "function" is to be "interested spectators of action," not participants. And if the state lacks the force to coerce and the voice of the people can be heard, it is necessary to ensure that that voice says the right thing, as respected intellectuals have been advising for many years.

Hume's observation raises a number of questions. One dubious feature is the idea that force is on the side of the governed. Reality is more grim. A good part of human history supports the contrary thesis put forth a century earlier by advocates of the rule of Parliament against the King, but more significantly against the people: that "the power of the Sword is, and ever hath been, the Foundation of all Titles to Government." Force also has more subtle modes, including an array of costs well short of overt violence that attach to refusal to submit. Nevertheless, Hume's paradox is real. Even despotic rule is commonly founded on a measure of consent, and the abdication of rights is the hallmark of more free societies -- a fact that calls for analysis.

### The Harsher Side

The harsher side of the truth is highlighted by the fate of the popular movements of the past decade. In the Soviet satellites, the governors had ruled by force, not opinion. When force was withdrawn, the fragile tyrannies quickly collapsed, for the most part with little bloodshed. These remarkable successes have elicited some euphoria about the power of "love, tolerance, nonviolence, the human spirit, and forgiveness," Vaclav Havel's explanation for the failure of the police and military to crush the Czech uprising. The thought is comforting, but illusory, as even the most cursory look at history reveals. The crucial factor is not some novel form of love and nonviolence; no new ground was broken here. Rather, it was the withdrawal of Soviet force, and the collapse of the structures of coercion based upon it. Those who believe otherwise may turn for guidance to the ghost of Archbishop Romero and countless others who have tried to confront unyielding terror with the human spirit.

The recent events of Eastern and Central Europe are a sharp departure from the historical norm. Throughout modern history, popular forces motivated by radical democratic ideals have sought to combat autocratic rule. Sometimes they have been able to expand the realms of freedom and justice before being brought to heel. Often they are simply crushed. But it is hard to think of another case when established power simply withdrew in the face of a popular challenge. No less remarkable is the behavior of the reigning superpower, which not only did not bar these developments by force as in the past, but even encouraged them, alongside of significant internal changes.

The historical norm is illustrated by the dramatically contrasting case of Central America, where any popular effort to overthrow the brutal tyrannies of the oligarchy and the military is met with murderous force, supported or directly organized by the ruler of the hemisphere. Ten years ago, there were signs of hope for an end to the dark ages of terror and misery, with the rise of self-help groups, unions, peasant associations, Christian base communities, and other popular organizations that might have led the way to democracy and social reform. This prospect elicited a stern response by the United States and its clients, generally supported by its European allies, with a campaign of slaughter, torture, and general barbarism that left societies "affected by terror and panic," "collective intimidation and generalized fear" and "internalized acceptance of the terror," in the words of a Church-based Salvadoran human rights organization. Early efforts in Nicaragua to direct resources to the poor majority impelled Washington to economic and

ideological warfare, and outright terror, to punish these transgressions by destroying the economy and social life.

Enlightened Western opinion regards such consequences as a success insofar as the challenge to power and privilege is rebuffed and the targets are properly chosen: killing prominent priests in public view is not clever, but rural activists and union leaders are fair game -- and of course peasants, Indians, students, and other low-life generally. Shortly after the murder of the Jesuit priests in El Salvador in November 1989, the wires carried a story by AP correspondent Douglas Grant Mine entitled "Second Salvador Massacre, but of Common Folk," reporting how soldiers entered a working class neighborhood, captured six men, lined them up against a wall and murdered them, adding a 14-year-old boy for good measure. They "were not priests or human rights campaigners," Mine wrote, "so their deaths have gone largely unnoticed" -- as did his story, which was buried.

"The same week the Jesuits were killed," Central America correspondent Alan Nairn writes, "at least 28 other civilians were murdered in similar fashion. Among them were the head of the water works union, the leader of the organization of university women, nine members of an Indian farming cooperative, ten university students,.... Moreover, serious investigation of the Salvadoran murders leads directly to Washington's doorstep." All "absolutely appropriate," hence unworthy of mention or concern. So the story continues, week after grisly week.

The comparison between the Soviet and U.S. domains is a commonplace outside of culturally deprived sectors of the West, as illustrated in earlier Z articles. Guatemalan

journalist Julio Godoy, who fled when his newspaper, La Epoca, was blown up by state terrorists (an operation that aroused no interest in the United States; it was not reported, though well-known), writes that Eastern Europeans are, "in a way, luckier than Central Americans": "while the Moscow-imposed government in Prague would degrade and humiliate reformers, the Washington-made government in Guatemala would kill them. It still does, in a virtual genocide that has taken more than 150,000 victims... [in what Amnesty International calls] a 'government program of political murder'." That, he suggested, is "the main explanation for the fearless character of the students' recent uprising in Prague: the Czechoslovak Army doesn't shoot to kill.... In Guatemala, not to mention El Salvador, random terror is used to keep unions and peasant associations from seeking their own way" -- and to ensure that the press conforms, or disappears, so that Western liberals need not fret over censorship in the "fledgling democracies" they applaud.

Godoy quotes a European diplomat who says, "as long as the Americans don't change their attitude towards the region, there's no space here for the truth or for hope." Surely no space for nonviolence and love.

One will search far to find such truisms in U.S. commentary, or the West in general, which much prefers largely meaningless (though self-flattering) comparisons between Eastern and Western Europe. Nor is the hideous catastrophe of capitalism in the past years a major theme of contemporary discourse, a catastrophe that is dramatic in Latin America and other domains of the industrial West, in the "internal Third World" of the United States, and the "exported slums" of Europe. Nor are we likely to

find much attention to the fact, hard to ignore, that the economic success stories typically involve coordination of the state and financial-industrial conglomerates, another sign of the collapse of capitalism in the past 60 years. It is only the Third World that is to be subjected to the destructive forces of free market capitalism, so that it can be more efficiently robbed and exploited by the powerful.

Central America represents the historical norm, not Eastern Europe. Hume's observation requires this correction. Recognizing that, it remains true, and important, that government is typically founded on modes of submission short of force, even where force is available as a last resort.

### The Bewildered Herd And Its Shepherds

In the contemporary period, Hume's insight has been revived and elaborated, but with a crucial innovation: control of thought is more important for governments that are free and popular than for despotic and military states. The logic is straightforward. A despotic state can control its domestic enemy by force, but as the state loses this weapon, other devices are required to prevent the ignorant masses from interfering with public affairs, which are none of their business. These prominent features of modern political and intellectual culture merit a closer look.

The problem of "putting the public in its place" came to the fore with what one historian calls "the first great outburst of democratic thought in history," the English revolution of the 17th century. This awakening of the

general populace raised the problem of how to contain the threat.

The libertarian ideas of the radical democrats were considered outrageous by respectable people. They favored universal education, guaranteed health care, and democratization of the law, which one described as a fox, with poor men the geese: "he pulls off their feathers and feeds upon them." They developed a kind of "liberation theology" which, as one critic ominously observed, preached "seditious doctrine to the people" and aimed "to raise the rascal multitude...against all men of best quality in the kingdom, to draw them into associations and combinations with one another...against all lords, gentry, ministers, lawyers, rich and peaceable men" (historian Clement Walker). Particularly frightening were the itinerant workers and preachers calling for freedom and democracy, the agitators stirring up the rascal multitude, and the printers putting out pamphlets questioning authority and its mysteries. "There can be no form of government without its proper mysteries," Walker warned, mysteries that must be "concealed" from the common folk: "Ignorance, and admiration arising from ignorance, are the parents of civil devotion and obedience," a thought echoed by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor. The radical democrats had "cast all the mysteries and secrets of government...before the vulgar (like pearls before swine)," he continued, and have "made the people thereby so curious and so arrogant that they will never find humility enough to submit to a civil rule." It is dangerous, another commentator ominously observed, to "have a people know their own strength." The rabble did not want to be ruled by King or Parliament, but "by countrymen like ourselves, that know our wants." Their

pamphlets explained further that "It will never be a good world while knights and gentlemen make us laws, that are chosen for fear and do but oppress us, and do not know the people's sores."

These ideas naturally appalled the men of best quality. They were willing to grant the people rights, but within reason, and on the principle that "when we mention the people, we do not mean the confused promiscuous body of the people." After the democrats had been defeated, John Locke commented that "day-labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairymaids" must be told what to believe: "The greatest part cannot know and therefore they must believe."

Like John Milton and other civil libertarians of the period, Locke held a sharply limited conception of freedom of expression. His Fundamental Constitution of Carolina barred those who "speak anything in their religious assembly irreverently or seditiously of the government or governors, or of state matters." The constitution guaranteed freedom for "speculative opinions in religion," but not for political opinions. "Locke would not even have permitted people to discuss public affairs," Leonard Levy observes. The constitution provided further that "all manner of comments and expositions on any part of these constitutions, or on any part of the common or statute laws of Carolines, are absolutely prohibited." In drafting reasons for Parliament to terminate censorship in 1694, Locke offered no defense of freedom of expression or thought, but only considerations of expediency and harm to commercial interests. With the threat of democracy overcome and the libertarian rabble dispersed, censorship was permitted to lapse in England, because the "opinion-



formers...censored themselves. Nothing got into print which frightened the men of property," Christopher Hill comments. In a well-functioning state capitalist democracy like the United States, what might frighten the men of property is generally kept far from the public eye -- sometimes, with quite astonishing success.

Such ideas have ample resonance until today, including Locke's stern doctrine that the common people should be denied the right even to discuss public affairs. This doctrine remains a basic principle of modern democratic states, now implemented by a variety of means to protect the operations of the state from public scrutiny: classification of documents on the largely fraudulent pretext of national security, clandestine operations, and other measures to bar the rascal multitude from the political arena. Such devices typically gain new force under the regime of statist reactionaries of the Reagan-Thatcher variety. The same ideas frame the essential professional task and responsibility of the intellectual community: to shape the perceived historical record and the picture of the contemporary world in the interests of the powerful, thus ensuring that the public keeps to its place and function, properly bewildered.

In the 1650s, supporters of Parliament and the army against the people easily proved that the rabble could not be trusted. This was shown by their lingering monarchist sentiments and their reluctance to place their affairs in the hands of the gentry and the army, who were "truly the people," though the people in their foolishness did not agree. The mass of the people are a "giddy multitude," "beasts in men's shapes." It is proper to suppress them, just as it is proper "to save the life of a lunatique or distracted person even against his will." If

the people are so "depraved and corrupt" as to "confer places of power and trust upon wicked and undeserving men, they forfeit their power in this behalf unto those that are good, though but a few."

The good and few may be the gentry or industrialists, or the vanguard Party and the Central Committee, or the intellectuals who qualify as "experts" because they articulate the consensus of the powerful (to paraphrase one of Henry Kissinger's insights). They manage the business empires, ideological institutions, and political structures, or serve them at various levels. Their task is to shepherd the bewildered herd and keep the giddy multitude in a state of implicit submission, and thus to bar the dread prospect of freedom and self-determination.

Similar ideas have been forged as the Spanish explorers set about what Tzvetan Todorov calls "the greatest genocide in human history" after they "discovered America" 500 years ago. They justified their acts of terror and oppression on the grounds that the natives are not "capable of governing themselves any more than madmen or even wild beasts and animals, seeing that their food is not any more agreeable and scarcely better than that of wild beasts" and their stupidity "is much greater than that of children and madmen in other countries" (professor and theologian Francisco de Vitoria, "one of the pinnacles of Spanish humanism in the sixteenth century"). Therefore, intervention is legitimate "in order to exercise the rights of guardianship," Todorov comments, summarizing de Vitoria's basic thought.

When English savages took over the task a few years later, they naturally adopted the same pose while taming the wolves in the guise of men, as George Washington described the objects that stood in the way of the advance of civilization and had to be eliminated for their own good. The English colonists had already handled the Celtic "wild men" the same way, for example, when Lord Cumberland, known as "the butcher," laid waste to the Scottish highlands before moving on to pursue his craft in North America.

One hundred and fifty years later, their descendants had purged North America of this native blight, reducing the lunatics from 10 million to 200,000 according to some recent estimates, and they turned their eyes elsewhere, to civilize the wild beasts in the Philippines. The Indian fighters to whom President McKinley assigned the task of "Christianizing" and "uplifting" these unfortunate creatures rid the liberated islands of hundreds of thousands of them, accelerating their ascent to heaven. They too were rescuing "misguided creatures" from their depravity by "slaughtering the natives in English fashion," as the New York described their painful responsibility, adding that we must take "what muddy glory lies in the wholesale killing til they have learned to respect our arms," then moving on to "the more difficult task of getting them to respect our intentions."

This is pretty much the course of history, as the plague of European civilization devastated much of the world.

On the home front, the continuing problem was formulated plainly by the 17th century political thinker Marchamont Nedham. The proposals of the radical

democrats, he wrote, would result in "ignorant Persons, neither of Learning nor Fortune, being put in Authority." Given their freedom, the "self-opinionated multitude" would elect "the lowest of the People" who would occupy themselves with "Milking and Gelding the Purses of the Rich," taking "the ready Road to all licentiousness, mischief, mere Anarchy and Confusion." These sentiments are the common coin of modern political and intellectual discourse; increasingly so as popular struggles did succeed, over the centuries, in realizing the proposals of the radical democrats, so that ever more sophisticated means had to be devised to reduce their substantive content.

Such problems regularly arise in periods of turmoil and social conflict. After the American revolution, rebellious and independent farmers had to be taught by force that the ideals expressed in the pamphlets of 1776 were not to be taken seriously. The common people were not to be represented by countrymen like themselves, that know the people's sores, but by gentry, merchants, lawyers, and others who hold or serve private power. Jefferson and Madison believed that power should be in the hands of the "natural aristocracy," Edmund Morgan comments, "men like themselves" who would defend property rights against Hamilton's "paper aristocracy" and from the poor; they "regarded slaves, paupers, and destitute laborers as an ever-present danger to liberty as well as property." The reigning doctrine, expressed by the Founding Fathers, is that "the people who own the country ought to govern it" (John Jay). The rise of corporations in the 19th century, and the legal structures devised to grant them dominance over private and public life, established the victory of the Federalist opponents of popular democracy in a new and powerful form.

Not infrequently, revolutionary struggles pit aspirants to power against one another though united in opposition to radical democratic tendencies among the common people. Lenin and Trotsky, shortly after seizing state power in 1917, moved to dismantle organs of popular control, including factory councils and Soviets, thus proceeding to deter and overcome socialist tendencies. An orthodox Marxist, Lenin did not regard socialism as a viable option in this backward and underdeveloped country; until his last days, it remained for him an "elementary truth of Marxism, that the victory of socialism requires the joint efforts of workers in a number of advanced countries," Germany in particular. In what has always seemed to me his greatest work, George Orwell described a similar process in Spain, where the Fascists, Communists, and liberal democracies were united in opposition to the libertarian revolution that swept over much of the country, turning to the conflict over the spoils only when popular forces were safely suppressed. There are many examples, often influenced by great power violence.

This is particularly true in the Third World. A persistent concern of Western elites is that popular organizations might lay the basis for meaningful democracy and social reform, threatening the prerogatives of the privileged. Those who seek "to raise the rascal multitude" and "draw them into associations and combinations with one another" against "the men of best quality" must, therefore, be repressed or eliminated. It comes as no surprise that Archbishop Romero should be assassinated shortly after urging President Carter to withhold military aid from the governing junta, which, he warned, will use it to "sharpen injustice and repression against the

people's organizations" struggling "for respect for their most basic human rights."

The threat of popular organization to privilege is real enough in itself. Worse still, "the rot may spread," in the terminology of political elites; there may be a demonstration effect of independent development in a form that attends to the people's sores. Internal documents and even the public record reveal that a driving concern of U.S. planners has been the fear that the "virus" might spread, "infecting" regions beyond.

This concern breaks no new ground. European statesmen had feared that the American revolution might "lend new strength to the apostles of sedition" (Metternich), and might spread "the contagion and the invasion of vicious principles" such as "the pernicious doctrines of republicanism and popular selfrule," one of the Czar's diplomats warned. A century later, the cast of characters was reversed. Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State Robert Lansing feared that if the Bolshevik disease were to spread, it would leave the "ignorant and incapable mass of humanity dominant in the earth"; the Bolsheviks, he continued, were appealing "to the proletariat of all countries, to the ignorant and mentally deficient, who by their numbers are urged to become masters, ...a very real danger in view of the process of social unrest throughout the world." Again it is democracy that is the awesome threat. When soldiers and workers councils made a brief appearance in Germany, Wilson feared that they would inspire dangerous thoughts among "the American negro [soldiers] returning from abroad." Already, he had heard, negro laundresses were demanding more than the going wage, saying that "money is as much mine as it is yours." Businessmen

might have to adjust to having workers on their boards of directors, he feared, among other disasters, if the Bolshevik virus were not exterminated.

With these dire consequences in mind, the Western invasion of the Soviet Union was justified on defensive grounds, against "the Revolution's challenge...to the very survival of the capitalist order" (John Lewis Gaddis). And it was only natural that the defense of the United States should extend from invasion of the Soviet Union to Wilson's Red Scare at home. As Lansing explained, force must be used to prevent "the leaders of Bolshevism and anarchy" from proceeding to "organize or preach against government in the United States"; the government must not permit "these fanatics to enjoy the liberty which they now seek to destroy." The repression launched by the Wilson administration successfully undermined democratic politics, unions, freedom of the press, and independent thought, in the interests of corporate power and the state authorities who represented its interests, all with the general approval of the media and elites generally, all in self-defense against the "ignorant and mentally deficient" majority. Much the same story was re-enacted after World War II, again under the pretext of a Soviet threat, in reality, to restore submission to the rulers.

When political life and independent thought revived in the 1960s, the problem arose again, and the reaction was the same. The Trilateral Commission, bringing together liberal elites from Europe, Japan, and the United States, warned of an impending "crisis of democracy" as segments of the public sought to enter the political arena. This "excess of democracy" was posing a threat to the unhampered rule of privileged elites -- what is called

"democracy" in political theology. The problem was the usual one: the rabble were trying to manage their own affairs, gaining control over their communities and pressing their political demands. There were organizing efforts among young people, ethnic minorities, women, social activists, and others, encouraged by the struggles of benighted masses elsewhere for freedom and independence. More "moderation in democracy" would be required, the Commission concluded, perhaps a return to the days when "Truman had been able to govern the country with the cooperation of a relatively small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers," as the American rapporteur commented.

The fears expressed by the men of best quality in the 17th century have become a major theme of intellectual discourse, corporate practice, and the academic social sciences. They were expressed by the influential moralist and foreign affairs adviser Reinhold Niebuhr, who was revered by George Kennan, the Kennedy intellectuals, and many others. He wrote that "rationality belongs to the cool observers" while the common person follows not reason but faith. The cool observers, he explained, must recognize "the stupidity of the average man," and must provide the "necessary illusion" and the "emotionally potent oversimplifications" that will keep the naive simpletons on course. As in 1650, it remains necessary to protect the "lunatic or distracted person," the ignorant rabble, from their own "depraved and corrupt" judgments, just as one does not allow a child to cross the street without supervision.

In accordance with the prevailing conceptions, there is no infringement of democracy if a few corporations control the information system: in fact, that is the



essence of democracy. The leading figure of the public relations industry, Edward Bernays, explained that "the very essence of the democratic process" is "the freedom to persuade and suggest," what he calls "the engineering of consent." If the freedom to persuade happens to be concentrated in a few hands, we must recognize that such is the nature of a free society.

Bernays expressed the basic point in a public relations manual of 1928: "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society... It is the intelligent minorities which need to make use of propaganda continuously and systematically." Given its enormous and decisive power, the highly class conscious business community of the United States has been able to put these lessons to effective use. Bernays' advocacy of propaganda is cited by Thomas McCann, head of public relations for the United Fruit Company, for which Bernays provided signal service in preparing the ground for the overthrow of Guatemalan democracy in 1954, a major triumph of business propaganda with the willing compliance of the media.

The intelligent minorities have long understood this to be their function. Walter Lippmann described a "revolution" in "the practice of democracy" as "the manufacture of consent" has become "a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government." This is a natural development when public opinion cannot be trusted: "In the absence of institutions and education by which the environment is so successfully reported that the realities of public life stand out very sharply against self-centered opinion, the common interests very largely elude public opinion entirely, and can be managed only by a

specialized class whose personal interests reach beyond the locality," and are thus able to perceive "the realities." These are the men of best quality, who alone are capable of social and economic management.

It follows that two political roles must be clearly distinguished, Lippmann goes on to explain. First, there is the role assigned to the specialized class, the "insiders," the "responsible men," who have access to information and understanding. Ideally, they should have a special education for public office, and should master the criteria for solving the problems of society: "In the degree to which these criteria can be made exact and objective, political decision," which is their domain, "is actually brought into relation with the interests of men." The "public men" are, furthermore, to "lead opinion" and take the responsibility for "the formation of a sound public opinion." "They initiate, they administer, they settle," and should be protected from "ignorant and meddling outsiders," the general public, who are incapable of dealing "with the substance of the problem." The criteria we apply to government are success in satisfying material and cultural wants, not whether "it vibrates to the self-centered opinions that happen to be floating in men's minds." Having mastered the criteria for political decision, the specialized class, protected from public meddling, will serve the public interest -- what is called "the national interest" in the webs of mystification spun by the academic social sciences and political commentary.

The second role is "the task of the public," which is much more limited. It is not for the public, Lippmann observes, to "pass judgment on the intrinsic merits" of an issue or to offer analysis or solutions, but merely, on

occasion, to place "its force at the disposal" of one or another group of "responsible men." The public "does not reason, investigate, invent, persuade, bargain, or settle." Rather, "the public acts only by aligning itself as the partisan of someone in a position to act executively," once he has given the matter at hand sober and disinterested thought. It is for this reason that "the public must be put in its place." The bewildered herd, trampling and roaring, "has its function": to be "the interested spectators of action," not participants. Participation is the duty of "the responsible man."

These ideas, described by Lippmann's editors as a progressive "political philosophy for liberal democracy," have an unmistakeable resemblance to the Leninist concept of a vanguard party that leads the masses to a better life that they cannot conceive or construct on their own. In fact, the transition from one position to the other, from Leninist enthusiasm to "celebration of America," has proven quite an easy one over the years. This is not surprising, since the doctrines are similar at their root. The critical difference lies in an assessment of the prospects for power: through exploitation of mass popular struggle, or service to the current masters.

There is, clearly enough, an unspoken assumption behind the proposals of Lippmann and others: the specialized class are offered the opportunity to manage public affairs by virtue of their subordination to those with real power -- in our societies, dominant business interests -- a crucial fact that is ignored in the self-praise of the elect.

Lippmann's thinking on these matters dates from shortly after World War I, when the liberal intellectual community was much impressed with its success in

serving as "the faithful and helpful interpreters of what seems to be one of the greatest enterprises ever undertaken by an American president" (New Republic). The enterprise was Woodrow Wilson's interpretation of his electoral mandate for "peace without victory" as the occasion for pursuing victory without peace, with the assistance of the liberal intellectuals, who later praised themselves for having "impose[d] their will upon a reluctant or indifferent majority," with the aid of propaganda fabrications about Hun atrocities and other such devices. They were serving, often unwittingly, as instruments of the British Ministry of Information, which secretly defined its task as "to direct the thought of most of the world."

Fifteen years later, the influential political scientist Harold Lasswell explained in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* that when elites lack the requisite force to compel obedience, social managers must turn to "a whole new technique of control, largely through propaganda." He added the conventional justification: we must recognize the "ignorance and stupidity [of] ...the masses" and not succumb to "democratic dogmatisms about men being the best judges of their own interests." They are not, and we must control them, for their own good. The same principle guides the business community. Others have developed similar ideas, and put them into practice in the ideological institutions: the schools, the universities, the popular media, the elite journals, and so on. A challenge to these ideas arouses trepidation, sometimes fury, as when students of the 1960s, instead of simply bowing to authority, began to ask too many questions and to explore beyond the bounds established for them. The pretense of manning the ramparts against the onslaught

of the barbarians, now a popular pose, is scarcely more than comical fraud.

The doctrines of Lippmann, Lasswell, and others are entirely natural in any society in which power is narrowly concentrated but formal mechanisms exist by which ordinary people may, in theory, play some role in shaping their own affairs -- a threat that plainly must be barred.

The techniques of manufacture of consent are most finely honed in the United States, a more advanced business-run society than its allies and one that is in important ways more free than elsewhere, so that the ignorant and stupid masses are more dangerous. But the same concerns arise in Europe, as in the past, heightened by the fact that the European varieties of state capitalism have not yet progressed as far as the United States in eliminating labor unions and other impediments to rule by men (and occasionally women) of best quality, thus restricting politics to factions of the business party. The basic problem, recognized throughout, is that as the state loses the capacity to control the population by force, privileged sectors must find other methods to ensure that the rascal multitude is removed from the public arena. And the insignificant nations must be subjected to the same practices as the insignificant people. Liberal doves hold that others should be free and independent, but not free to choose in ways that we regard as unwise or contrary to our interests, a close counterpart to the prevailing conception of democracy at home as a form of population control.

A properly functioning system of indoctrination has a variety of tasks, some rather delicate. One of its targets is

the stupid and ignorant masses. They must be kept that way, diverted with emotionally potent oversimplifications, marginalized, and isolated. Ideally, each person should be alone in front of the TV screen watching sports, soap operas, or comedies, deprived of organizational structures that permit individuals lacking resources to discover what they think and believe in interaction with others, to formulate their own concerns and programs, and to act to realize them. They can then be permitted, even encouraged, to ratify the decisions of their betters in periodic elections. The rascal multitude are the proper targets of the mass media and a public education system geared to obedience and training in needed skills, including the skill of repeating patriotic slogans on timely occasions.

For submissiveness to become a reliable trait, it must be entrenched in every realm. The public are to be observers, not participants, consumers of ideology as well as products. Eduardo Galeano writes that "the majority must resign itself to the consumption of fantasy. Illusions of wealth are sold to the poor, illusions of freedom to the oppressed, dreams of victory to the defeated and of power to the weak." Nothing less will do.

The problem of indoctrination is a bit different for those expected to take part in serious decision-making and control: the business, state, and cultural managers, and articulate sectors generally. They must internalize the values of the system and share the necessary illusions that permit it to function in the interests of concentrated power and privilege or at least be cynical enough to pretend that they do, an art that not many can master. But they must also have a certain grasp of the realities of the

world, or they will be unable to perform their tasks effectively. The elite media and educational systems must steer a course through these dilemmas, not an easy task, one plagued by internal contradictions. It is intriguing to see how it is faced, but that is beyond the scope of these remarks.

For the home front, a variety of techniques of manufacture of consent are required, geared to the intended audience and its ranking on the scale of significance. For those at the lowest rank, and for the insignificant peoples abroad, another device is available, what a leading turn-of-the-century American sociologist, Franklin Henry Giddings, called "consent without consent": "if in later years, [the colonized] see and admit that the disputed relation was for the highest interest, it may be reasonably held that authority has been imposed with the consent of the governed," as when a parent disciplines an uncomprehending child. Giddings was referring to the "misguided creatures" that we were reluctantly slaughtering in the Philippines, for their own good. But the lesson holds more generally.

As noted, the Bolshevik overtones are apparent throughout. The systems have crucial differences, but also striking similarities. Lippmann's "specialized class" and Bernays' "intelligent minority," which are to manage the public and their affairs according to liberal democratic theory, correspond to the Leninist vanguard of revolutionary intellectuals. The "manufacture of consent" advocated by Lippmann, Bernays, Niebuhr, Lasswell and others is the Agitprop of their Leninist counterparts. Following a script outlined by Bakunin over a century ago, the secular priesthood in both of the major systems of hierarchy and coercion regard the

masses as stupid and incompetent, a bewildered herd who must be driven to a better world -- one that we, the intelligent minority, will construct for them, either taking state power ourselves in the Leninist model, or serving the owners and managers of the state capitalist systems if it is impossible to exploit popular revolution to capture the commanding heights.

Much as Bakunin had predicted long before, the Leninist "Red bureaucracy" moved at once to dismantle organs of popular control, particularly, any institutional structures that might provide working people with some influence over their affairs as producers or citizens.

Not surprisingly, the immediate destruction of the incipient socialist tendencies that arose during the ferment of popular struggle in 1917 has been depicted by the world's two great propaganda systems as a victory for socialism. For the Bolsheviks, the goal of the farce was to extract what advantage they could from the moral prestige of socialism; for the West, the purpose was to defame socialism and entrench the system of ownership and management control over all aspects of economic, political, and social life. The collapse of the Leninist system cannot properly be called a victory for socialism, any more than the collapse of Hitler and Mussolini could be described in these terms; but as in those earlier cases, it does eliminate a barrier to the realization of the libertarian socialist ideals of the popular movements that were crushed in Russia in 1917, Germany shortly after, Spain in 1936, and elsewhere, often with the Leninist vanguard leading the way in taming the rascal multitude with their libertarian socialist and radical democratic aspirations.



## Short of Force

Hume posed his paradox for both despotic and more free societies. The latter case is by far the more important. As the social world becomes more free and diverse, the task of inducing submission becomes more complex and the problem of unraveling the mechanisms of indoctrination, more challenging. But intellectual interest aside, the case of free societies has greater significance for us, because here we are talking about ourselves and can act upon what we learn. It is for just this reason that the dominant culture will always seek to externalize human concerns, directing them to the inadequacies and abuses of others. When U.S. plans go awry in some corner of the Third World, we devote our attention to the defects and special problems of these cultures and their social disorders -- not our own. Fame, fortune, and respect await those who reveal the crimes of official enemies: those who undertake the vastly more important task of raising a mirror to their own societies can expect quite different treatment. George Orwell is famous for *Animal Farm* and *1984*, which focus on the official enemy. Had he addressed the more interesting and significant question of thought control in relatively free and democratic societies, it would not have been appreciated, and instead of wide acclaim, he would have faced silent dismissal or obloquy. Let us nevertheless turn to the more important and unacceptable questions.

Keeping to governments that are more free and popular, why do the governed submit when force is on their side? First, we have to look at a prior question: to what extent is force on the side of the governed? Here some care is necessary. Societies are considered free and democratic insofar as the power of the state to coerce is limited. The

United States is unusual in this respect: Perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, the citizen is free from state coercion, at least, the citizen who is relatively privileged and of the right color, a substantial part of the population.

But it is a mere truism that the state represents only one segment of the nexus of power. Control over investment, production, commerce, finance, conditions of work, and other crucial aspects of social policy lies in private hands. Unwillingness to adapt to this structure of authority and domination carries costs, ranging from state force to the costs of privation and struggle; even an individual of independent mind can hardly fail to compare these to the benefits, however meager, that accrue to submission. Meaningful choices are thus narrowly limited. Similar factors limit the range of ideas and opinion in obvious ways. Articulate expression is shaped by the same private powers that control the economy. It is largely dominated by major corporations that sell audiences to advertisers and naturally reflect the interests of the owners and their market. The ability to articulate and communicate one's views, concerns, and interests -- or even to discover them -- is thus narrowly constrained as well.

Denial of these truisms about effective power is at the heart of the structure of necessary illusion. Thus, a media critic, reviewing a book on the press in the New York Times, refers without argument to the "traditional Jeffersonian role" of the press "as counterbalance to government power." The phrase encapsulates three crucial assumptions, one historical, one descriptive, one ideological. The historical claim is that Jefferson was a committed advocate of freedom of the press, which is

false. The second is that the press in fact functions as a counterbalance to government rather than as a faithful servant, presented here as doctrine, thus evading any need to face the massive array of detailed documentation that refutes this dogma. The ideological principle is that Jeffersonian libertarianism (considered abstractly, apart from its realization in practice) would demand that the press be a counterbalance to government power. That is incorrect. The libertarian conception is that the press should be independent, hence a counterbalance to centralized power of any form. In Jefferson's day, the powers that loomed large were the state, the church, and feudal structures. Shortly after, new forms of centralized power emerged in the world of corporate capitalism. A Jeffersonian would hold, then, that the press should be a counterbalance to state or corporate power, and critically to the state-corporate nexus. But to raise this point carries us into forbidden ground.

Apart from the general constraints on choice and articulate opinion inherent in the concentration of private power, it also set narrow limits on the actions of government. The United States has again been unusual in this respect among the industrial democracies, though convergence toward the U.S. pattern is evident elsewhere. The United States is near the limit in its safeguards for freedom from state coercion, and, also in the poverty of its political life. There is essentially one political party, the business party, with two factions. Shifting coalitions of investors account for a large part of political history. Unions, or other popular organizations that might offer a way for the general public to play some role in influencing programs and policy choices, scarcely function apart from the narrowest realm. The ideological system is bounded by the consensus of the

privileged. Elections are largely a ritual form. In congressional elections, virtually all incumbents are returned to office, a reflection of the vacuity of the political system and the choices it offers. There is scarcely a pretense that substantive issues are at stake in the presidential campaigns. Articulated programs are hardly more than a device to garner votes, and candidates adjust their messages to their audiences as public relations tacticians advise. Political commentators ponder such questions as whether Reagan will remember his lines, or whether Mondale looks too gloomy, or whether Dukakis can duck the slime flung at him by George Bush's speech writers. In the 1984 elections, the two political factions virtually exchanged traditional policies, the Republicans presenting themselves as the party of Keynesian growth and state intervention in the economy, the Democrats as the advocates of fiscal conservatism; few even noticed. Half the population does not bother to push the buttons, and those who take the trouble often consciously vote against their own interest.

The public is granted an opportunity to ratify decisions made elsewhere, in accord with the prescriptions of Lippmann and other democratic theorists. It may select among personalities put forth in a game of symbolic politics that only the most naive take very seriously. When they do, they are mocked by sophisticates. Criticism of President Bush's call for "revenue enhancement" after having won the election by the firm and eloquent promise not to raise taxes is a "political cheap shot," Harvard political scientist and media specialist Marty Linsky comments under the heading "Campaign pledges -- made to be broken." When Bush won the election by leading the public in the "read my

lips -- no new taxes" chant, he was merely expressing his "world view," making "a statement of his hopes." Those who thought he was promising no new taxes do not understand that "elections and governing are different ball games, played with different objectives and rules." "The purpose of elections is to win," Linsky correctly observes, expressing the cynicism of the sophisticated; and "the purpose of governing is to do the best for the country," he adds, parroting the necessary illusions that respectability demands.

Even when issues arise in the political system, the concentration of effective power limits the threat. The question is largely academic in the United States because of the subordination of the political and ideological system to business interests, but in democracies to the south, where conflicting ideas and approaches reach the political arena, the situation is different. As is again familiar, government policies that private power finds unwelcome will lead to capital flight, disinvestment, and social decline until business confidence is restored with the abandonment of the threat to privilege; these facts of life exert a decisive influence on the political system (with military force in reserve if matters get out of hand, supported or applied by the North American enforcer). To put the basic point crassly, unless the rich and powerful are satisfied, everyone will suffer, because they control the basic social levers, determining what will be produced and consumed, and what crumbs will filter down to their subjects. For the homeless in the streets, then, the primary objective is to ensure that the rich live happily in their mansions. This crucial factor, along with simple control over resources, severely limits the force on the side of the governed and diminishes Hume's

paradox in a well-functioning capitalist democracy in which the general public is scattered and isolated.

Understanding of these basic conditions -- tacit or explicit -- has long served as a guide for policy. Once popular organizations are dispersed or crushed and decision-making power is firmly in the hands of owners and managers, democratic forms are quite acceptable, even preferable as a device of legitimation of elite rule in a business-run "democracy." The pattern was followed by U.S. planners in reconstructing the industrial societies after World War II, and is standard in the Third World, though assuring stability of the desired kind is far more difficult there, except by state terror. Once a functioning social order is firmly established, an individual who must find a (relatively isolated) place within it in order to survive will tend to think its thoughts, adopt its assumptions about the inevitability of certain forms of authority, and in general, adapt to its ends. The costs of an alternative path or a challenge to power are high, the resources are lacking, and the prospects limited. These factors operate in slave and feudal societies -- where their efficacy has duly impressed counterinsurgency theorists. In free societies, they manifest themselves in other ways. If their power to shape behavior begins to erode, other means must be sought to tame the rascal multitude.

When force is on the side of the masters, they may rely on relatively crude means of manufacture of consent and need not overly concern themselves with the minds of the herd. Nevertheless, even a violent terror state faces Hume's problem. The modalities of state terrorism that the United States has devised for its clients have commonly included at least a gesture towards "winning

hearts and minds," though experts warn against undue sentimentality on this score, arguing that "all the dilemmas are practical and as neutral in an ethical sense as the laws of physics." Nazi Germany shared these concerns, as Albert Speer discusses in his autobiography, and the same is true of Stalinist Russia. Discussing this case, Alexander Gerschenkron observes that "Whatever the strength of the army and the ubiquitousness of the secret police which such a government may have at its disposal, it would be naive to believe that those instruments of physical oppression can suffice. Such a government can maintain itself in power only if it succeeds in making people believe that it performs an important social function which could not be discharged in its absence. Industrialization provided such a function for the Soviet government..., [which] did what no government relying on the consent of the governed could have done... But, paradoxical as it may sound, these policies at the same time have secured some broad acquiescence on the part of the people. If all the forces of the population can be kept engaged in the processes of industrialization and if this industrialization can be justified by the promise of happiness and abundance for future generations and -- much more importantly -- by the menace of military aggression from beyond the borders, the dictatorial government will find its power broadly unchallenged."

The thesis gains support from the rapid collapse of the Soviet system when its incapacity to move to a more advanced stage of industrial and technological development became evident.

The Pragmatic Criterion

It is important to be aware of the profound commitment of Western opinion to the repression of freedom and democracy, by violence if necessary. To understand our own cultural world, we must recognize that advocacy of terror is clear, explicit, and principled, across the political spectrum. It is superfluous to invoke the thoughts of Jeane Kirkpatrick, George Will, and the like. But little changes as we move to "the establishment left," to borrow the term used by Foreign Policy editor Charles William Maynes in an ode to the American crusade "to spread the cause of democracy."

Consider political commentator Michael Kinsley, who represents "the left" in mainstream commentary and television debate. When the State Department publicly confirmed U.S. support for terrorist attacks on agricultural cooperatives in Nicaragua, Kinsley wrote that we should not be too quick to condemn this official policy. Such international terrorist operations doubtless cause "vast civilian suffering," he conceded. But if they succeed "to undermine morale and confidence in the government," then they may be "perfectly legitimate." The policy is "sensible" if "cost-benefit analysis" shows that "the amount of blood and misery that will be poured in" yields "democracy," in the conventional sense already discussed.

As a spokesperson for the establishment left, Kinsley insists that terror must meet the pragmatic criterion; violence should not be employed for its own sake, merely because we find it amusing. This more humane conception would readily be accepted by Saddam Hussein, Abu Nidal, and the Hizbollah kidnappers, who, presumably, also consider terror pointless unless it is of value for their ends. These facts help us situate



enlightened Western opinion on the international spectrum.

Such reasoned discussion of the justification for terror is not at all unusual, which is why it elicits no reaction in respectable circles just as there is no word of comment among its left-liberal contributors and readers when the New Republic, long considered the beacon of American liberalism, advocates military aid to "Latin-style fascists...regardless of how many are murdered" because "there are higher American priorities than Salvadoran human rights."

Appreciation of the "salutary efficacy" of terror, to borrow John Quincy Adams's phrase, has been a standard feature of enlightened Western thought. It provides the basic framework for the propaganda campaign concerning international terrorism in the 1980s. Naturally, terrorism directed against us and our friends is bitterly denounced as a reversion to barbarism. But far more extreme terrorism that we and our agents conduct is considered constructive, or at worst insignificant, if it meets the pragmatic criterion. Even the vast campaign of international terrorism launched against Cuba by the Kennedy administration, far exceeding anything attributed to official enemies, does not exist in respected academic discourse or the mainstream media. In his standard and much respected scholarly study of international terrorism, Walter Laqueur depicts Cuba as a sponsor of the crime with innuendos but scarcely a pretense of evidence, while the campaign of international terrorism against Cuba merits literally not a word; in fact, Cuba is classed among those societies "free from terror."

The guiding principle is clear and straightforward: their terror is terror, and the flimsiest evidence suffices to denounce it and to exact retribution upon civilian bystanders who happen to be in the way; our terror, even if far more extreme, is merely statecraft, and therefore does not enter into the discussion of the plague of the modern age. The practice is understandable on the principles already discussed.

Huge massacres are treated by much the same criteria: theirs are crimes, ours statecraft or understandable error. In a study of U.S. power and ideology a decade ago, Edward Herman and I reviewed numerous examples of two kinds of atrocities, "benign and constructive bloodbaths" that are acceptable or even advantageous to dominant interests, and "nefarious blood-baths" perpetrated by official enemies. The reaction follows the same pattern as the treatment of terrorism. The former are ignored, denied, or sometimes even welcomed; the latter elicit great outrage and often large-scale deceit and fabrication, if the available evidence is felt to be inadequate for doctrinal requirements.

Such devices as mass starvation have always been considered entirely legitimate, if they meet the pragmatic criterion. As director of the humanitarian program providing food to starving Europeans after World War II, Herbert Hoover advised President Wilson that he was "maintaining a thin line of food" to guarantee the rule of anti-Bolshevik elements. In response to rumors of "a serious outbreak on May Day" in Austria, Hoover issued a public warning that any such action would jeopardize the city's sparse food supply. Food was withheld from Hungary under the Communist Bela Kun government, with a promise that it would be supplied if he were

removed in favor of a government acceptable to the U.S. The economic blockade, along with Rumanian military pressure, forced Kun to relinquish power and flee to Moscow. Backed by French and British forces, the Rumanian military joined with Hungarian counter-revolutionaries to administer a dose of White terror and install a right-wing dictatorship under Admiral Horthy, who collaborated with Hitler in the next stage of slaying the Bolshevik beast. The threat of starvation was also used to buy the critical Italian elections of 1948 and to help impose the rule of U.S. clients in Nicaragua in 1990, among other noteworthy examples.

A review of the debate over Central America during the past decade reveals the decisive role of the pragmatic criterion. Guatemala was never an issue, because mass slaughter and repression appeared to be effective. Early on, the Church was something of a problem, but, as Kenneth Freed comments in the Los Angeles Times, when "14 priests and hundreds of church workers were killed in a military campaign to destroy church support for social gains such as higher wages and an end to the exploitation of Indians," the church was intimidated and "virtually fell silent." "The physical intimidation ceased," the pragmatic criterion having been satisfied. Terror increased again as the U.S. nurtured what it likes to call "democracy." "The victims," a European diplomat observes, "are almost always people whose views or activities are aimed at helping others to free themselves of restraints placed by those who hold political or economic power," such as "a doctor who tries to improve the health of babies" and is therefore "seen as attacking the established order." The security forces of the "fledgling democracy," and the death squads associated

with them, appeared to have the situation reasonably well in hand, so there was no reason for undue concern in the United States, and there has been virtually none.

Throughout this grim decade of savagery and oppression, liberal humanists have presented themselves as critical of the terror states maintained by U.S. violence in Central America. But that is only a facade, as we see from the demand, virtually unanimous in respectable circles, that Nicaragua must be restored to "the Central American mode" of the death squad regimes, and that the U.S. and its murderous clients must impose the "regional standards" of El Salvador and Guatemala on the errant Sandinistas.

Returning to Hume's principles of government, it is clear that they must be refined. True, when force is lacking and the standard penalties do not suffice, it is necessary to resort to the manufacture of consent. The populations of the Western democracies -- or at least, those in a position to defend themselves -- are off limits. Others are legitimate objects of repression, and in the Third World, large-scale terror is appropriate, though the liberal conscience adds the qualification that it must be efficacious. The statesman, as distinct from the ideological fanatic, will understand that the means of violence should be employed in a measured and considered way, just sufficient to achieve the desired ends.

### The Range of Means

The pragmatic criterion dictates that violence is in order only when the rascal multitude cannot be controlled in other ways. Often, there are other ways. Another RAND

corporation counterinsurgency specialist was impressed by "the relative docility of poorer peasants and the firm authority of landlords in the more 'feudal' areas... [where] the landlord can exercise considerable influence over his tenant's behavior and readily discourage conduct inconsistent with his own interests." It is only when the docility is shaken, perhaps by meddlesome priests, that firmer measures are required.

One option short of outright violence is legal repression. In Costa Rica, the United States was willing to tolerate social democracy. The primary reason for the benign neglect was that labor was suppressed and the rights of investors offered every protection. The founder of Costa Rican democracy, Jose Figueres, was an avid partisan of U.S. corporations and the CIA, and was regarded by the State Department as "the best advertising agency that the United Fruit Company could find in Latin America." But the leading figure of Central American democracy fell out of favor in the 1980s, and had to be censored completely out of the Free Press, because of his critical attitude towards the U.S. war against Nicaragua and Washington's moves to restore Costa Rica as well to the preferred "Central American mode." Even the effusive editorial and lengthy obituary in the New York Times lauding this "fighter for democracy" when he died in June 1990 were careful to avoid these inconvenient deviations.

In earlier years, when he was better behaved, Figueres recognized that the Costa Rican Communist Party, particularly strong among plantation workers, was posing an unacceptable challenge. He therefore arrested its leaders, declared the party illegal, and repressed its members. The policy was maintained through the 1960s,

while efforts to establish any working class party were banned by the state authorities. Figueres explained these actions with candor: it was "a sign of weakness. I admit it, when one is relatively weak before the force of the enemy, it is necessary to have the valor to recognise it." These moves were accepted in the West as consistent with the liberal concept of democracy, and indeed, were virtually a precondition for U.S. toleration of "the Costa Rican exception."

Sometimes, however, legal repression is not enough; the popular enemy is too powerful. The alarm bells are sure to ring if they threaten the control of the political system by the business-landowner elite and military elements properly respectful of U.S. interests. Signs of such deviation call for stronger measures, as in Central America through the past decade. The broader framework was sketched by Father Ignacio Martin-Baro, one of the Jesuit priests assassinated in November 1989 and a noted Salvadoran social psychologist, in a talk he delivered in California on "The Psychological Consequences of Political Terrorism," a few months before he was murdered. He stressed several relevant points. First, the most significant form of terrorism, by a large measure, is state terrorism, that is, "terrorizing the whole population through systematic actions carried out by the forces of the state." Second, such terrorism is an essential part of a "government-imposed socio-political project" designed for the needs of the privileged. To implement it, the whole population must be "terrorized by an internalized fear." Third, the sociopolitical project and the state terrorism that helps implement it are not specific to El Salvador, but are common features of the Third World domains of the United States. The reasons are deeply rooted in Western culture, institutions, and

policy planning, and fully in accord with the values of enlightened opinion. But terror is constrained by the pragmatic criterion. Thus, Martin-Baro observes, the "massive campaign of political terrorism" in El Salvador declined when "there was less need for extraordinary events, because people were so terrorized, paralyzed."

In a paper on mass media and public opinion in El Salvador which he was to deliver at an International Congress in December 1989, the month after he was assassinated, Martin-Baro wrote that the U.S. counterinsurgency project "emphasized merely the formal dimensions of democracy," and that the mass media must be understood as a mechanism of "psychological warfare." The small independent journals in El Salvador, mainstream and pro-business but still too undisciplined for the rulers, had been taken care of by the security forces a decade earlier in the usual efficacious manner -- kidnapping, assassination, and physical destruction, events considered here too insignificant even to report. As for public opinion, Martin-Baro's unread paper reports a study showing that among workers, the lower-middle class, and the poor, less than 20 percent feel free to express their opinions in public, a figure that rose to 40 percent for the rich -- another tribute to the salutary efficacy of terror, and another result that "all Americans can be proud of," to borrow George Schultz's words of self-praise for our achievements in El Salvador.

When Antonio Gramsci was imprisoned after the Fascist takeover of Italy, the government summed up its case by saying: "We must stop this brain from functioning for twenty years." Our current favorites leave less to chance: the brains must be stopped from functioning forever, and

we agree that their thoughts about such matters as state terrorism had best not be heard.

The results of U.S. military training are evident in abundance in the documentation by human rights groups and the Salvadoran Church. They are graphically described by Rev. Daniel Santiago, a Catholic priest working in El Salvador, in the Jesuit journal *America*. He reports the story of a peasant woman, who returned home one day to find her mother, sister, and three children sitting around a table, the decapitated head of each person placed carefully on the table in front of the body, the hands arranged on top "as if each body was stroking its own head." The assassins, from the Salvadoran National Guard, had found it hard to keep the head of an 18-month-old baby in place, so they nailed the hands onto it. A large plastic bowl filled with blood was tastefully displayed in the center of the table.

Rev. Santiago writes that macabre scenes of the kind he recounts are designed by the armed forces for the purpose of intimidation. "People are not just killed by death squads in El Salvador -- they are decapitated and then their heads are placed on pikes and used to dot the landscape. Men are not just disemboweled by the Salvadoran Treasury Police; their severed genitalia are stuffed into their mouths. Salvadoran women are not just raped by the National Guard; their wombs are cut from their bodies and used to cover their faces. It is not enough to kill children; they are dragged over barbed wire until the flesh falls from their bones while parents are forced to watch." "The aesthetics of terror in El Salvador is religious." The intention is to ensure that the individual is totally subordinated to the interests of the Fatherland, which is why the death squads are sometimes



called the "Army of National Salvation" by the governing ARENA party, whose members (including President Cristiani) take a blood oath to the "leader-for-life," Roberto d'Aubuisson.

It has been a constant lament of U.S. government officials that the Latin American countries are insufficiently repressive, too open, too committed to civil liberties, unwilling to impose sufficient constraints on travel and dissemination of information, and in general reluctant to adhere to U.S. social and political standards, thus tolerating conditions in which dissidence can flourish and can reach a popular audience.

At home, even tiny groups may be subject to severe repression if their potential outreach is perceived to be too great. During the campaign waged by the national political police against The Black Panthers -- including assassination, instigation of ghetto riots, and a variety of other means -- the FBI estimated the "hard core members" of the targeted organization at only 800, but added ominously that "a recent poll indicates that approximately 25 per cent of the black population has a great respect for the [Black Panther Party], including 43 per cent of blacks under 21 years of age." The repressive agencies of the state proceeded with a campaign of violence and disruption to ensure that the Panthers did not succeed in organizing as a substantial social or political force -- with great success, as the organization was decimated and the remnants proceeded to self-destruct. FBI operations in the same years targeting the entire New Left were motivated by similar concerns. The same internal intelligence document warns that "the movement of rebellious youth known as the 'New Left,' involving and influencing a substantial number of

college students, is having a serious impact on contemporary society with a potential for serious domestic strife." The New Left has "revolutionary aims" and an "identification with Marxism-Leninism." It has attempted "to infiltrate and radicalize labor," and after failing "to subvert and control the mass media," has established "a large network of underground publications which serve the dual purpose of an internal communication network and an external propaganda organ." It thus poses a threat to "the civilian sector of our society," which must be contained by the state security apparatus.

We can learn a good deal by attention to the range of choices. Keeping just to Latin America, consider the efforts to eliminate the Allende regime in Chile. There were two parallel operations. Track II, the hard line, aimed at a military coup. This was concealed from Ambassador Edward Korry, a Kennedy liberal, whose task was to implement Track I, the soft line; in Korry's words, to "do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty, a policy designed for a long time to come to accelerate the hard features of a Communist society in Chile." The soft line was an extension of the long-term CIA effort to control Chilean democracy. One indication of its level is that in the 1964 election, the CIA spent twice as much per Chilean voter to block Allende as the total spent per voter by both parties in the U.S. elections of the same year. Similarly in the case of Cuba, the Eisenhower administration planned a direct attack while Vice-President Nixon, keeping to the soft line in a secret discussion of June 1960, expressed his concern that according to a CIA briefing, "Cuba's economic situation had not deteriorated significantly since the overthrow of

Batista," then urging specific measures to place "greater economic pressure on Cuba."

To take another informative case, in 1949 the CIA identified "two areas of instability" in Latin America: Bolivia and Guatemala. The Eisenhower administration pursued the hard line to overthrow capitalist democracy in Guatemala but chose the soft line with regard to a Bolivian revolution that had the support of the Communist Party and radical tin miners, had led to expropriation, and had even moved towards "criminal agitation of the Indians of the farms and mines" and a pro-peace conference, a right-wing Archbishop warned. The White House concluded that the best plan was to support the least radical elements, expecting that U.S. pressures, including domination of the tin market, would serve to control unwanted developments. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles urged that this would be the best way to contain the "Communist infection in South America." Following standard policy guidelines, the U.S. took control over the Bolivian military, equipping it with modern armaments and sending hundreds of officers to the "school of coups" in Panama and elsewhere. Bolivia was soon subject to U.S. influence and control. By 1953, the National Security Council noted improvement in "the climate for private investment," including "an agreement permitting a private American firm to exploit two petroleum areas."

A military coup took place in 1964. A 1980 coup was carried out with the assistance of Klaus Barbie, who had been sent to Bolivia when he could no longer be protected in France, where he had been working under U.S. control to repress the anti-fascist resistance, as he had done under the Nazis. According to a recent

UNICEF study, one out of three Bolivian infants dies in the first year of life, so that Bolivia has the slowest rate of population growth in Latin America along with the highest birth rate. The FAO estimates that the average Bolivian consumes 78 percent of daily minimum calorie and protein requirements and that more than half of Bolivian children suffer from malnutrition. Of the economically active population, 25 percent are unemployed and another 40 percent work in the "informal sector" (e.g., smuggling and drugs). The situation in Guatemala we have already reviewed.

Several points merit attention. First, the consequences of the hard line in Guatemala and the soft line in Bolivia were similar. Second, both policy decisions were successful in their major aim: containing the "Communist virus," the threat of "ultranationalism." Third, both policies are evidently regarded as quite proper, as we can see in the case of Bolivia by the complete lack of interest in what has happened since (apart from possible costs to the U.S. through the drug racket); and with regard to Guatemala, by the successful intervention under Kennedy to block a democratic election, the direct U.S. participation in murderous counterinsurgency campaigns under Lyndon Johnson, the continuing supply of arms to Guatemala through the late 1970s (contrary to illusory claims) and the reliance on our Israeli mercenary state to fill any gaps when congressional restrictions finally took effect, the enthusiastic U.S. support for atrocities that go well beyond even the astonishing Guatemalan norm in the 1980s, and the applause for the "fledgling democracy" that the ruling military now tolerates as a means to extort money from Congress. We may say that these are "messy episodes" and "blundering" (which in fact

succeeded in its major aims), but nothing more (Stephen Kinzer). Fourth, the soft line and the hard line were adopted by the same people, at the same time, revealing that the issues are tactical, involving no departure from shared principle. All of this provides insight into the nature of policy, and the political culture in which it is formed.

### The Untamed Rabble

Hume's paradox of government arises only if we suppose that a crucial element of essential human nature is what Bakunin called "an instinct for freedom." It is the failure to act upon this instinct that Hume found surprising. The same failure inspired Rousseau's classic lament that people are born free but are everywhere in chains, seduced by the illusions of the civil society that is created by the rich to guarantee their plunder. Some may adopt this assumption as one of the "natural beliefs" that guide their conduct and their thought. There have been efforts to ground the instinct for freedom in a substantive theory of human nature. They are not without interest, but they surely come nowhere near establishing the case. Like other tenets of common sense, this belief remains a regulative principle that we adopt, or reject, on faith. Which choice we make can have large-scale effects for ourselves and others.

Those who adopt the common sense principle that freedom is our natural right and essential need will agree with Bertrand Russell that anarchism is "the ultimate ideal to which society should approximate." Structures of hierarchy and domination are fundamentally illegitimate. They can be defended only on grounds of contingent need, an argument that rarely stands up to analysis. As

Russell went on to observe 70 years ago, "the old bonds of authority" have little intrinsic merit. Reasons are needed for people to abandon their rights, "and the reasons offered are counterfeit reasons, convincing only to those who have a selfish interest in being convinced." "The condition of revolt," he went on, "exists in women towards men, in oppressed nations towards their oppressors, and above all in labour towards capital. It is a state full of danger, as all past history shows, yet also full of hope."

Russell traced the habit of submission in part to coercive educational practices. His views are reminiscent of 17th and 18th century thinkers who held that the mind is not to be filled with knowledge "from without, like a vessel," but "to be kindled and awaked." "The growth of knowledge [resembles] the growth of Fruit; however external causes may in some degree cooperate, it is the internal vigour, and virtue of the tree, that must ripen the juices to their just maturity." Similar conceptions underlie Enlightenment thought on political and intellectual freedom, and on alienated labor, which turns the worker into an instrument for other ends instead of a human being fulfilling inner needs -- a fundamental principle of classical liberal thought, though long forgotten, because of its revolutionary implications. These ideas and values retain their power and their pertinence, though they are very remote from realization, anywhere. As long as this is so, the libertarian revolutions of the 18th century remain far from consummated, a vision for the future.

One might take this natural belief to be confirmed by the fact that despite all efforts to contain them, the rabble continue to fight for their fundamental human rights.

And over time, some libertarian ideals have been partially realized or have even become common coin. Many of the outrageous ideas of the 17th century radical democrats, for example, seem tame enough today, though other early insights remain beyond our current moral and intellectual reach.

The struggle for freedom of speech is an interesting case, and a crucial one, since it lies at the heart of a whole array of freedoms and rights. A central question of the modern era is when, if ever, the state may act to interdict the content of communications. As noted earlier, even those regarded as leading libertarians have adopted restrictive and qualified views on this matter. One critical element is seditious libel, the idea that the state can be criminally assaulted by speech, "the hallmark of closed societies throughout the world," legal historian Harry Kalven observes. A society that tolerates laws against seditious libel is not free, whatever its other virtues. In late 17th century England, men were castrated, disemboweled, quartered, and beheaded for the crime. Through the 18th century, there was a general consensus that established authority could be maintained only by silencing subversive discussion, and "any threat, whether real or imagined, to the good reputation of the government" must be barred by force (Leonard Levy). "Private men are not judges of their superiors... [for] This would confound all government," one editor wrote. Truth was no defense: true charges are even more criminal than false ones, because they tend even more to bring authority into disrepute.

Treatment of dissident opinion, incidentally, follows a similar model in our more libertarian era. False and ridiculous charges are no real problem: it is the

unconscionable critics who reveal unwanted truths from whom society must be protected.

The doctrine of seditious libel was also upheld in the American colonies. The intolerance of dissent during the revolutionary period is notorious. The leading American libertarian, Thomas Jefferson, agreed that punishment was proper for "a traitor in thought, but not in deed," and authorized internment of political suspects. He and the other Founders agreed that "traitorous or disrespectful words" against the authority of the national state or any of its component states was criminal. "During the Revolution," Leonard Levy observes, "Jefferson, like Washington, the Adamses, and Paine, believed that there could be no toleration for serious differences of political opinion on the issue of independence, no acceptable alternative to complete submission to the patriot cause. Everywhere there was unlimited liberty to praise it, none to criticize it." At the outset of the Revolution, the Continental Congress urged the states to enact legislation to prevent the people from being "deceived and drawn into erroneous opinion." It was not until the Jeffersonians were themselves subjected to repressive measures in the late 1790s that they developed a body of more libertarian thought for self-protection -- reversing course, however, when they gained power themselves.

Until World War I, there was only a slender basis for freedom of speech in the United States, and it was not until 1964 that the law of seditious libel was struck down by the Supreme Court. In 1969, the Court finally protected speech apart from "incitement to imminent lawless action." Two centuries after the revolution, the Court at last adopted the position that had been advocated in 1776 by Jeremy Bentham, who argued that



a free government must permit "malcontents" to "communicate their sentiments, concert their plans, and practice every mode of opposition short of actual revolt, before the executive power can be legally justified in disturbing them." The 1969 Supreme Court decision formulated a libertarian standard which, I believe, is unique in the world. In Canada, for example, people are still imprisoned for promulgating "false news," recognized as a crime in 1275 to protect the King.

In Europe, the situation is still more primitive. France is a striking case, because of the dramatic contrast between the self-congratulatory rhetoric and repressive practice so common as to pass unnoticed. England has only limited protection for freedom of speech, and even tolerates such a disgrace as a law of blasphemy. The reaction to the Salman Rushdie affair, most dramatically on the part of self-styled "conservatives," was particularly noteworthy. Rushdie was charged with seditious libel and blasphemy in the courts, but the High Court ruled that the law of blasphemy extended only to Christianity, not Islam, and that only verbal attack "against Her Majesty or Her Majesty's Government or some other institution of the state" counts as seditious libel. Thus the Court upheld a fundamental doctrine of the Ayatollah Khomeini, Stalin, Goebbels, and other opponents of freedom, while recognizing that English law protects only domestic power from criticism. Doubtless many would agree with Conor Cruise O'Brien, who, when Minister for Posts and Telegraphs in Ireland, amended the Broadcasting Authority Act to permit the Authority to refuse to broadcast any matter that, in the judgment of the minister, "would tend to undermine the authority of the state."

We should also bear in mind that the right to freedom of speech in the United States was not established by the First Amendment to the Constitution, but only through dedicated efforts over a long period by the labor movement, the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, and other popular forces. James Madison pointed out that a "parchment barrier" will never suffice to prevent tyranny. Rights are not established by words, but won and sustained by struggle.

It is also worth recalling that victories for freedom of speech are often won in defense of the most depraved and horrendous views. The 1969 Supreme Court decision was in defense of the Ku Klux Klan from prosecution after a meeting with hooded figures, guns, and a burning cross, calling for "burning the nigger" and "sending the Jews back to Israel." With regard to freedom of expression there are basically two positions: you defend it vigorously for views you hate, or you reject it in favor of Stalinist/Fascist standards.

Whether the instinct for freedom is real or not, we do not know. If it is, history teaches that it can be dulled, but has yet to be killed. The courage and dedication of people struggling for freedom, their willingness to confront extreme state terror and violence, is often remarkable. There has been a slow growth of consciousness over many years and goals have been achieved that were considered utopian or scarcely contemplated in earlier eras. An inveterate optimist can point to this record and express the hope that with a new decade, and soon a new century, humanity may be able to overcome some of its social maladies; others might draw a different lesson from recent history. It is hard to see rational grounds for affirming one or the other

perspective. As in the case of many of the natural beliefs that guide our lives, we can do no better than to choose according to our intuition and hopes.

The consequences of such a choice are not obscure. By denying the instinct for freedom, we will only prove that humans are a lethal mutation, an evolutionary dead end: by nurturing it, if it is real, we may find ways to deal with dreadful human tragedies and problems that are awesome in scale.

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